CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN PASTORAL TRANSITION

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A FINAL PROJECT SUBMITTEED TO
THE DOCTORAL STUDIES COMMITTEE
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

UNITED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
DAYTON, OHIO
December, 2011

United Theological Seminary
Dayton, Ohio

Faculty Approval Page
Doctor of Ministry Final Project

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ABSTRACT

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This project is designed to establish appropriate protocols for pastoral change and transition for pastors under Episcopal appointment. The project will also seek to provide a collaborative and consultative process for congregations to avoid unwanted pastoral changes. A proactive research methodology will be used to test the hypothesis that if denominations with Episcopal leadership work together with local church leaders around issues of the appointment of pastors, an increase in congregational acceptance will occur. The model will be tested using a controlled focus group, a series of workshops and a conflict resolution process utilizing biblically based and practical educational components.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The writer would like to thank his wife Ketisha, and his daughters Jazmine and Makayla for their patience, understanding and underlying support during his matriculation through United Theological Seminary. He knows that at times, he may have seemed distance but rest assured; he was always there.

He would like to thank his sister Mildred Weston, who told him education was important, and always saw in him what he did not see in himself. Thanks for honoring your word, taking him to Pizza Hut and Ringling Brothers Circus; because of you, the writer received an A on his test. You instilled in him that God had great things in store for him. Thanks Mildred.

The writer also thanks his parents, Malcolm Sr., Mary and other family members, Judy, Ricky, Wanda and Iris for encouraging him to continue when at times he really wanted to quit.

To Bishop Kenneth Monroe, thank you for your confidence in appointing the writer to his current congregation. Without this appointment, this project would not have materialized and developed.

Thank you to the writer's peer group for being a listening ear; never judging or criticizing, rather allowing the writer to be himself. Your support has helped the writer to become an agent for God; again, thanks.

To Robinson A.M.E. Zion Church, the writer extends thanks for receiving, and treating him in a way that pleases God. The writer thanks you for your support and participation in this project; without you, this could not be accomplished.

To Dr. J. Elvin Sadler, the writer is truly grateful for you. You have made the writer a better person in all aspects of life. You took the writer under your wings and guided him safely, and he knows at times you were firm; like a dad teaching his son to do well. Thank you for being a mentor, coach and in many respects a dad.

DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to the writer's grandmother, Ms. Josephine Wilson who made him go to church and instilled in him to love the Lord with his heart.

To his mother Mary B. Taylor, who always supported him and stood by him when there was no one else. Mrs. Taylor, you made this possible, and the writer says thanks!

To the sainted memory of Rev. Kenneth D. Lee, a trusted friend who passed away the week this project was being completed. You would say "I am proud of you and that you are going to do great things in the church." Thank you, friend, for your genuine encouragement. Leaving at such a time as this has been difficult, making conversations with you opportunities of quiet reflection. You will be missed; rest in God's eternal glory!

INTRODUCTION

> The term crisis intervention, although it may cause a novel ring when pondered for a moment, is not at all a surprising one to apply to the work of ministers, who are continually intervening in some crisis, and who do so both by invitation and by their own initiative. It is no more than stepping into a disturbed situation or the life of a disturbed person, a family or other group at an opportune time, in such a way as to stop the downward spiral of a deteriorating situation or condition, bringing love, support, assurance, and insight in an effort to lead to decisions that can redirect life.[1]

In the above quote, author David Switzer gives the reader a snapshot of some of the common approaches that leaders take during times of change and transition. Switzer illuminates many of the trying situations that leaders face as leadership transition takes place. At any given time, there will be trials that leaders face, but the question that must be pondered and answered is, "How do pastors handle the transition or storm and still minister to others?" The trials and storms of life that pastor's encounter seem to keep on coming, yet, pastors are *expected* to bring happiness, even in transition. Pastors must learn to preach and pastor through the storms. "One is either about to enter a storm, is currently in a storm or just left a storm."[2] At any point in a pastor's life and the lives of their members, pastors must provide encouragement knowing that in all things, God will provide their increase.

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[1]David Switzer, *The Minister as Crisis Counselor* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1986), 25.

[2]H. Beecher Hicks Jr*., Preaching Through A Storm* (Grand Rapids, MI: Judson Press, 1987), 23.

The context for this project is Robinson African Methodist Episcopal (A. M. E.) Zion Church, located in the rural township of Cheraw, South Carolina. The church and the writer have been engaged in pastoral transition which is the basis for establishing the problem statement for this project. Through this transition, there is the possibility of impairing a thriving congregation and the ministry of the pastor.

The ministry focus for this project which is titled, *Conflict Resolution in Pastoral Transition,* becomes the process by which the writer will assist congregations in effectively reducing the tensions between the appointment of a pastor and the acceptance of the pastor by the assigned congregation. The author attempts to answer the following questions; (1) How does the incoming pastor create and establish a relationship with a congregation that did not desire a pastoral change?; (2) How does the incoming pastor create a healing environment for themselves as a result of being reappointed?

Chapter One illustrates the area of the ministry focus addressed by this model, the reason for this ministry focus and the insights the author has gained in order to design a model for appointed pastors and churches to follow.

Chapter Two discusses literature relevant to the particular ministry focus. A narrative analysis of the problem statement as identified by the synergy between the writer and the congregation will be used to illuminate existing dialogue, identify current treatment and solutions for the problem, and to demonstrate the authors grasp of this field of study. The author intends to relate the implications of transition from a biblical insight.

Chapter Three establishes the theoretical foundation of the model that the author postulates to examine the project ministry. It discusses biblical, theological and historical foundations established for pastoral succession.

Chapter Four unfolds the research methodology chosen to authenticate and test the presuppositions that undergird this project. The rationale for choosing this particular methodology is outlined and the basis for the field test is established.

Chapter Five details the results of the field experience. An overview of what took place during the implementation of the field work and the subsequent data gathered will be tabulated and analyzed.

Chapter Six provide culminating thoughts on the matriculation of the writer in this Doctor of Ministry program including reflections on the ministry project itself. It summarizes the expected outcomes of the field experience, the effectiveness of the project model and further applications to prevent future transitional conflict. This chapter addressed the strengths and weaknesses of the project model, what could have been done differently and how this project can be replicated in other congregational settings that have Episcopal leadership.

CHAPTER ONE

MINISTRY FOCUS

This study focuses on the tension that arrives from the unexpected and unwelcome changes in pastoral transition. Specifically, the writer will examine this phenomenon within the context of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church. The A. M. E. Zion Church has an Episcopal form of government. The denomination has twelve Bishops who govern the church. Within each Episcopal area, the Bishop has authority to make pastoral appointments when they feel necessary. The ministry structure is that of itinerant ministry. Itinerancy is the form of ministry where ministers are cycled from church to church as frequently as year to year. Ministers are seen as agents of the church to be used *at will* under the Bishop's authority. Ministers are ordained to preach and teach and if possible grow the church.

It is understood throughout the A. M. E. Zion Church that pastors do not stay at any one church for a significant period of time; they are normally appointed for one year four consecutive years and then moved. The Annual Conference is where Bishops make pastoral appointments which are extended from one annual conference session to the next; however, if by chance the Bishop decides to move a pastor, the pastor is expected to report to the new congregation immediately.

The Sunday before the Annual Conference, leaders would determine from among the membership if they desired a pastoral change. It was as if the members could vote

whether the pastor should return for another year. Many times, this approach became negative and churches would have mixed emotions because there would always be someone in the church who had a love for the current pastor and wanted them to be reappointed while others wanted them to leave.

The A. M. E. Zion Church's General Conference of 2000 voted in legislative session to discontinue the process of considering *the wishes of the people.* This decision had a profound effect on the life and ministry of the writer. Although the writer does not find fault with the Bishop for the problems that arose in his context as a result of a pastoral change, he feels that moving a pastor without consultation and collaboration with the congregation can and does causes problems for both the pastor and the congregation.

All ministers who receive an ordination within the A. M. E. Zion Church clearly understand that the church is built upon itinerant ministry. In fact, ordination is so sacred that ministers bow on bended knees at an altar to take an oath to follow the discipline and ordnances of the church. The writer does not have a problem with the structure of the church's polity, but questions the lack of consultation and collaboration with pastors and congregations before an appointment is made final. The writer knows from experiences what happens when a pastor makes a commitment to a specific church and without consultation is moved to another congregation. From this perspective, the writer seeks to illuminate the transitional impact of pastoral appointments in the absence of pastoral and congregational consultation. Unless there is systemic change with the present appointment process; a change that assists both pastors and congregations to transition effectively, there will be a great fallout or decline in the A. M. E. Zion Church.

Why This Area of Ministry Was Chosen

An educational mechanism must be put in place to assist pastors and congregations in managing conflict resulting for an unwanted and unwelcomed transition of leadership with emphasis on pastoral transitions. Through the writer's own experience with transition, he knows full well the devastating effects on both pastor and congregation when the appointment process is unwelcomed or does not go smoothly.

When pastors are moved unexpectedly, whether it be wanted or unwanted, there can be devastating effects on the pastor and the new congregation, notwithstanding the advent of a pastoral family who is also affected by the transition. When a pastor is assigned to a congregation without warning or adequate preparation, there will be consequences. These consequences will occur regardless of the cooperation of the pastor in adhering to the rules and doctrines of the church as it relates to itinerant ministry.

The appointment to Robinson A. M. E. Zion Church evoked tremendous tension between the writer and the congregation when their existing pastor was reappointed and the writer assumed the leadership of the church. While Robinson A. M. E. Zion did not automatically shut down or reject the writer as their new pastor, there was a sense of frustration in the atmosphere. The reappointment of the existing pastor was done in such a way that it appeared the writer was being forced upon the members of the church and their former pastor was being torn from their midst. As a result of this awkward exchange and transition, members of the church frequently compared the writer to the former pastor. Members would say things like, "Things are not done the same as our old pastor did it!" A pastor who is not well informed or experienced in such transitions will be caught off guard to such ridicule and unrealistic expectations and may become defensive

and or cynical in their defense, thereby resulting in unnecessary and damaging hostility and negativity for both pastor and congregation.

Pastoral transitions that occur without proper consultation with the pastor may affect the pastor's family. The writer's own experience relates to this prescribed issue. Moving to a new location has caused his children's grades to drop dramatically; one child moved from being an honor roll student to becoming a borderline student, the other child has been removed from school altogether. The wife of the writer has to drive 40 miles to work creating an economic hardship on the family. Financially and emotionally, the transition was devastating to the writer. Statistics will concur that the divorce rate among clergy family's are at an all time high due to unwanted moves. Unwanted moves are also the root causation for family unrest. The strain of trying to fit in and become the pastor in a new congregation alters how the pastor's family allocates their time between home and the new congregation.

An unwanted or unexpected pastoral transition could literally cause the newly appointed pastor to show signs of unusual stress and anxiety. The pressure of trying to fill multiple roles and being all things to all people can causes the newly appointed pastor to lose sight of wholistic balance leading to clergy burnout, especially when the congregation becomes unruly and express unchristian behavior and hostility towards their newly appointed pastor. G. Lloyd Rediger helps to clearly see how sensitive the pastor's mind is when he states, "But, abusing pastors mentally, spiritually and physically is now the clergy nightmare come true. The growing abuse is also significant commentary on the

mental and spiritual health of the church, for how the church treats its leaders reveals even more about the church than about its leader."[1]

Biographical Information

The writer's journey began some thirty-nine years ago; he often wonders—how did he get to where he is today? Reflecting on his early childhood, the writer recalls with fond memories days spent with Mrs. Josephine Wilson, the writer's grandmother. Mrs. Wilson took care of the writer as an infant. Mrs. Wilson is now deceased but lived to be one hundred years old. The writer was only three months old when his mother was faced with making a difficult decision; she needed to return to work to help make ends meet so she sent the writer to live with Mrs. Wilson. It is not uncommon for grandparents to help raise their grandchildren; with Mrs. Wilson it was no exception. She was accustomed to having lots of children in her house; she also helped raise three older siblings as well as several of the writer's cousins. Mrs. Wilson's lifestyle was full of many challenges but she did the best that she could. She lived on a fixed income and by the time the writer came along, she was well into her golden years.

Mrs. Wilson lived in Eastover, South Carolina (a small town just east of Columbia) on one hundred and sixty acres of land—lands that she and other family members owned and farmed. The writer remembers his family having to get up early many mornings to operate farm equipment and tend to the gardens. They spent long hours in the hot sun picking peas, pulling weeds and gathering all sorts of vegetables. Mrs. Wilson instilled in her children and grandchildren the love of nature and an

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[1]G. Lloyd Rediger, Clergy Killers (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 20.

appreciation for the earth that God had bequeathed them. The earth was the source of their food since visits to the grocery store were infrequent. The writer cannot say that he misses laboring in the garden, nor enduring the intense heat of those long summer days of the south; but he is grateful for having experienced those hard times because they helped to mold and shape the man, the person, the minister, the father and the son he has become.

The writer did not realize until years later how awesome God is. It was in adulthood that the writer discovered that God had a purpose for his life. The discovery of God's purpose came as a result of overcoming hardships to appreciate all that he has accomplished. The writer is not ashamed of the past but will always cherish it as a precious memory. While he did not realize God's plan for his life until adulthood, God was preparing the writer for ministry through experiences while living with his grandmother. Mrs. Wilson would often encourage the writer to be a servant in the house of the Lord. She sang in the choir, was a deaconess and fed the preacher. The writer remembers with clarity and some resentment the many Sundays after church when she would prepare dinner for the preacher. The preacher would drive to Mrs. Wilson's house and sit at the table for what seemed like all day, while the writer and other family members watched in anticipation and frustration as the best parts of the fried chicken were devoured by the preacher and his family.

The preacher and his family were looked upon as royalty and the writer's family members were prohibited from joining them at the table—the writer felt unworthy because the preacher was a *Man of God.* The writer's emotions for the preacher and his family tittered on hatred and strong resentment. The kids would stand by watching as the

preacher's family partook of Mrs. Wilson's food. It seemed that they took the good fried chicken; the legs and thighs—leaving only the necks, backs and breasts for the writer's family to eat. As a kid, the writer thought to himself, "Who likes the breast anyway? The writer sure did not; the writer wanted that nice juicy leg. He liked the way it fit in his little hands as he would take a bite and savor the flavors running down his throat. Ah, what wonderful memories.

Going to church was the highlight of the writer's life. As a child, the writer was taught to respect the church and love God. The church was considered to be a very sacred place where children were not allowed to play or run allusively. Children were expected to sit quietly and pay attention to the preacher. The writer remembers once when he was sitting in the choir loft with Mrs. Wilson, and just so happened to fall asleep. To teach him that his behavior was inappropriate, Mrs. Wilson grabbed one of the writer's ears and yanked on it. It seemed as if she was trying to remove the ear from the writers head. Afterwards, she pointed her finger at the writer and said, "The church is not a place to sleep." At that moment, the writer realized that if he wanted to have equal or regular sized ears, the *church* was definitely off limits for catching up on sleep. Despite almost losing an ear, the writer grew very fond of attending church. He learned to become attentive to the preacher and watched with enthusiasm as he preached to the waiting congregation, whether he understood what the preacher was saying or not.

The preacher was like a magician. He would move in rhythm that made some members of the congregation pass out from shear excitement. It would appear that the preacher could wave his hands and instantly, people would go into convulsion, foaming at the mouth while running through the church. The writer realized today that this

behavior is now what is identified as *catching the Holy Ghost.* As a child, the writer was in awe and believed that preachers had the greatest power; power the preacher definitely wanted.

Mrs. Josephine Wilson was the one who told the writer that God had God's hands on him. The writer can remember pretending being a preacher and would preach his heart out as Mrs. Wilson watched through a window. The writer often thought to himself that maybe one day, he would be like the preacher that Mrs. Wilson fed on Sundays. Mrs. Wilson made sure that the writer went to Sunday school to learn as much as possible in order to be the preacher the writer was to become. He remembers Mrs. Wilson testing him to see if he knew the catechisms of the church. Yes, food was always the writers reward; whether it was cookies or ice cream, Mrs. Wilson knew how to get the writer to do what she thought the writer needed to become successful in life. Rain, sleet or snow, Mrs. Wilson made sure the writer was present in church. There was nothing or no one that could prevent Mrs. Wilson from going to church; it was like an outlet for her.

Mrs. Wilson's church membership was at Antioch A. M. E. Zion Church in Eastover South Carolina—it was like heaven. It was the church that every preacher wanted to pastor. The writer felt that preachers were attracted to the church because it was known for great singing; however, he noticed that no matter who the pastor was, they did not stay long.

On the bright side, it was probably a good experience for them. The church was and is full of proud people who were and are committed to doing the best they could, even if it meant changing pastors. Overall, Antioch is still a great church that has produced many prominent pastors who have blazed the gospel grounds. Even today, the

church still has an outstanding music department and musical choirs that produces heavenly sounds that the angels rejoice over. The writer loves this church because it represents a sense of stability and love.

When the writer was a little older, his parents decided to move to Hopkins from Columbia, South Carolina in an attempt to live closer to Mrs. Wilson. The writer ventured back and forth between two houses but his preference was to stay with his Mrs. Wilson. Mrs. Wilson's house was always the comfortable place to be. She allowed the writer to have what he wanted, to do what he wanted—to a certain extent she spoiled him. The writer thought she pampered him with love and affection. The writer thought that maybe Mrs. Wilson looked at him as her little baby boy.

The writer's mother was like a fire ant. She would snap her fingers and demanded the writer to respond immediately. The writer lives with his older siblings and a new arrival to the family; baby Iris. The writer became very jealous of Iris because she nudged him out of the baby spot and got all of the attention. Although the children were all united under one roof, the three older siblings experienced living with Mrs. Wilson just as the writer did. The writer's mother's pattern of having babies and shipping them off did not stop until the birth of Iris—the youngest. Mildred and Rickey were the oldest children from the mother's first marriage. Wanda was from her second marriage and he and Iris were from her third marriage.

As the writer reflects on living with his parents, the writer can remember his father being pastor of two churches at one time; Ebenezer Baptist Church in North Carolina and Glovers Chapel Baptist Church in McCormick, South Carolina. Back then it seemed the Taylors were always in church. The writer's father traveled significantly on

the revival circuit; it was mandatory that the family accompanied him. From the writer's vantage point, he and his siblings were paraded around from church to church as if they were his prized possessions.

The Baptist experience was new to the writer because the writer had become accustomed to A. M. E. Zion rituals and customs. Since his youth, the writer was able to grasp the Baptist doctrine—there is only one God so the transition was easy. During the family's many travels they would co-mingle with famous pastors who had large Baptist churches and experienced life as celebrities. Over the years of preaching across the country, the writer's father gained a name for himself and the family was always on the road. The writer's father was in high demand in the world of the church, however, for the writer, church was like going to a show.

As his dad preached, the writer once again found himself in awe of how women in the church would scream in convulsion as his father preached and shouted up and down the aisles of the church. It was a magic show all over again—just like the writer's early days attending church with Mrs. Wilson. The writer remembers an occasion when a lady shouted so much and worked up such a sweat that her makeup ran down her face. She looked like a sad clown because she cried and hollered the entire time. People were so enthused to hear the writer's father preach that it seemed like they were attending a concert.

Wherever his father preached, people packed the church; when he cranked it up and walked down the aisle preaching, the people got happy. Commanding this much attention from a wanting congregation was power the writer began to thirst after; a power that reminded him of a man in the Bible who wanted similar power.

Mildred, the writer's oldest sister and inspiration, got married and moved to Michigan. The writer admired her because she knew how to do things in grand style. The writer can remember struggling in a particular class and Mildred helping him for a test. Her incentive for doing well on the test was a meal at Pizza Hut and attendance at the Ringling Brothers and Barnum Bailey Circus which was town. The incentive was significant enough for the writer to study hard and ace the test. Mildred fulfilled her promise; she took him to Pizza Hut and to the Circus.

There have been many occasions when the writer has sought advice from Mildred knowing she would tell him what he needed to hear versus what he wanted to hear. Mildred's advice proved invaluable for the writer. From her advice and counsel, the writer developed a greater sense of responsibility when making decisions.

All of the writer's siblings have been instrumental in the writer's life by nurturing, supporting and advising; especially as he entered the early stages of his ministry. They have always encouraged the writer to be the best preacher he could be and to always take God's word seriously. When the writer was in high school, God's voice echoed in his ear as if God was there following his every step. In the final analysis, the writer realized that no matter what he did or where he went, God made sure that he knew God was there.

High School was fun but for some reason the writer knew that there was something about him that was different from some of the other boys in the neighborhood. They wanted to hang out and drink, but for the writer, he would rather be in church. One night while lying in bed, the writer heard the voice of God speaking to him. It was as if God was standing over him and directing him to go and preach God's gospel. The writer informed Wanda, his sister, who told him "God has placed God's word in you with

purpose, and if you allow His word to direct you, it will carry you for the rest of your life." The writer trusted the Word of God to direct his spiritual journey. After completing high school, the writer joined the United States Marine Corps where he quickly discovered that he would need the Lord even more.

In July of 1988, the writer left home for Boot Camp at Paris Island South Carolina. He was as naive as any kid leaving home for the first time. Somehow, God's Word gave him confidence that everything was going to be okay. The writer will never forget when he got to Paris Island, one of the first things he did was find a church. On the base, there were no churches that resembled the church the writer had left back home but just being in a house of God soothed and gave him a sense of refuge.

When the writer was a child in the A. M. E. Zion Church, he was christened, which is a form of baptism, usually for infants involving water and giving a child a Christian name. As an adult, the writer felt he needed to go under the water to make Baptism complete; he went to the Chaplin and requested to be immersed. The writer can remember standing in the water with what appeared to be the glory of God shinning down on him. He heard God saying to him, 'This is the only way to be baptized." The Chaplin grabbed him and lowered him down into the water; the writer came up smiling, knowing that God was pleased by his actions. Little did the writer know that God was preparing him for a life of ministry.

After the writer graduated from Boot Camp, he was stationed in Kaneohe, Hawaii to begin his official military career. Once again, the writer ventured on to unfamiliar territory—military life on the island of Hawaii. Once he arrived, his first priority was to find a church. As fate would have it, he did not have to look far because

there was daily Mass at the local chapel; the writer felt at home. For a month, the writer went to Mass hearing the word of God. However, to his dismay after regular visits, the Priest approached him saying that if he was not going to join the Catholic faith, he could no longer take communion. His feelings were torn into a million pieces— the writer has never had anyone put him out of a church. It was as if he had committed a crime and was being excommunicated from the people of God. The writer's heart ached and in his mind, he was in disbelief as he walked away from the church wondering if this was a church of God. The writer could not comprehend the thought of being put out of the church. Now, where must he go?

The writer did not know of any other churches or places of worship in the area. He felt like his walls had closed in on him and he did not understand what God was allowing to happen to him. Again, God was preparing him for the ministry. A friend directed the writer to a Pentecostal church on the other side of the island. This was a different worship experience all together; it was truly strange and unfamiliar. The people spoke in tongues and for the writer, this was taboo—people speaking in tongues according to his faith tradition were regarded as being funny or weird.

The writer's church rarely talked about speaking in tongues, so to enter in this new type of worship took some getting used to. The Marine who introduced him to the church was very involved. He was well mannered and caring as if he was a disciple of God. He took the writer to church and always treated him with the utmost respect. This particular marine carried his Bible everywhere and always talked about Jesus and the evidence of tongues. The writer did not understand what he meant by the evidence of

tongues but later found out that the Pentecostal church believes that speaking in tongue is a sign of one being a member of the church of God.

If you did not speak in tongues, you were not a part of the church. The writer wanted to be a member of the church of God but not necessarily a member of the Pentecostal church. He remembers a night when he and a friend wanted to experience speaking in tongue so the church prepared a large tub of water as a baptismal pool; they changed clothes and dressed in white robes and went down in the water. While in the water the church members began to sing; they began to say *Jesus* very urgently as if they were in a state of emergency. The pastor grabbed them, dipped them backwards and then pulled them up quickly and looked at them for some type of response.

The writer did not know what to say, so the other members told him to call on the name of Jesus and the Lord would give him the spirit of the utterance of tongues and the writer would began to speak in tongues. The writer called on the name of the Lord, but spoke no tongues. The preacher dipped him back down again and brought him up once more waiting to hear his response, but still no tongues. This process went on for what seemed hours until they realized that the writer was not going to speak in tongues that night. The pastor told him that he needed to tarry at night and pray and ask God to give him this gift. The writer fellowshipped with this church for six months until he realized this was not the place that God wanted him. The writer could not get the gift of speaking in tongues but felt God had some other work in store for him.

By this time, the writer married and began a family; his first child was a son who was named Dalton. One day while taking a family walk, the writer saw a couple with a tee shirt that had *First Baptist Church, Honolulu, Hawaii* on it. The writer engaged in

conversation with them leading to him being invited to church as their guest. The writer will never forget the first day he arrived at the church; he introduced himself to the church, and the congregation sang a congregational response. Yes, this felt like home. The writer joined that same day and began his work as a church member. The writer had not become a minister yet so his work was limited, but that was okay because he found a church whose traditions he was familiar with.

While on leave from the base, the writer returned home and was afforded the opportunity to preach his trial sermon and was officially entered into ministry. When the writer went back to First Baptist, he had a license to minister. While at First Baptist the writer began to see church from a different perspective as it relates to working and worshipping; servants work while worshippers worship.

No longer was the writer held to the same standards as everybody else, it was almost a second job because when the church doors opened, the writer was expected to be in place and busy paying attention to the Word. Bible study, prayer meeting, and Sunday school were all part of the writer's responsibilities and he was held accountable for his service. The writer stayed at First Baptist for two years until his family moved back to South Carolina. The writer was excited to serve at First Baptist Church, but he believed it was time for him to pastor.

The writer needed to land employment and secure living accommodations for his family; therefore, his ministry was put on hold. Not being able to secure employment, the writer packed the family and moved to Raleigh, North Carolina to live with his sister Wanda and her family. When the writer reflects on his transition, his pregnant wife, his son and driving up I 95 to live in Raleigh, he was excited. A life, his family envisioned,

so he thought, was a life of production and abundance with all that God had in store for his family.

Once the family landed in Raleigh, the writer joined Grace A. M. E. Zion Church under the leadership of W. E. Judd. After staying in Raleigh for about 6 months, the writer decided he needed another start; Raleigh was not the place for him. The writer called his oldest sister Mildred and asked her if he could come and try to secure employment in Michigan.

Once again, the family packed up and headed to a place of perceived destiny, seeking employment in Farmington Hills, Michigan. After being in Michigan for about two weeks, his wife found work at Stride Right in the North Hills Mall. The writer secured employment from Venture Industries a subsidiary of GM and work began. After searching for a place to live, the writer found an apartment in Detroit and began to secure his family. During this period, the writer and his wife were not on the best of terms; she missed her family dearly and decided to go back to Hawaii. The writers daughter Jazmine was born in Raleigh and because she was a baby girl, her grandmother thought it would be better if she returned to Hawaii; somehow the grandmother thought Jazmine would be better suited if she was raised around family. The writer's wife and family returned to Hawaii.

At an A. M. E. Zion's Annual Conference, the writer was approached by Bishop Enoch Benjamin Rochester. The Bishop asked, "What do you want to do in the church, how far do you want to go?" The writer answered him quickly and diligently "I want to be a Bishop Sir," and he said, "Do you have a college degree?" The writer said no; the Bishop replied, "What are your responsibilities as it related to your household?" The

writer informed the Bishop that he was single and ready to do whatever was necessary to be the best at serving the people of God. The Bishop took the writer into his office and called Livingstone College and informed the president that he had someone he wanted to send to school. The president extended the invitation for the writer to come. At that moment the writer knew that it was time to give up the lifestyle that he was living and do the work of the Lord. The writer packed up everything and moved to Salisbury, North Carolina to attend Livingstone College. The writer arrived at the college with no major in mind, all the writer knew was that he wanted to be a Bishop and was a preacher— "So what degrees do preachers have?"

The writer perused the academic catalog and saw sociology was the major of most preachers, so he chose sociology as his major. Once the writer got situated, he quickly searched for a church and found one on campus; immediately the writer found God's house. The campus church was sufficient; however, there was something peculiar about its pastor, as if she was God's gift to preaching. The writer could sense the Pentecostal atmosphere again causing him to determine that this was not the place for him. He saw a certain kind of crowd that flocked around the pastor; a crowd that was not conducive to his way of church life.

There was an A. M. E. Zion Church down the hill from the college; one Sunday, the writer visited and discovered that the pastor was his home church pastor as a child. As a result of a prior relationship, the writer joined this particular church. The pastor's name was Reverend Alonzo Parsons; it was Reverend Parson who took the writer in and mentored him into becoming a minister. Reverend Parson put the writer to work immediately working with the youth of the church. The writer enjoyed his new

assignment. He remembers one afternoon receiving a phone call that Reverend Parsons was being moved. This devastated the writer because it was like his father was being shipped off and there was nothing he could do.

Again, the writer was without a pastor and he began searching for a church. He attended a local Baptist church where he did not acknowledge himself as a minister. One day the writer listened to a sermon preached entitled, *A Life Changing God.* The message said that God would take people just as they are and change them to be what God needed them to be. The message was clear and convicting that it compelled the writer to tell the pastor about his situation.

Over the next several years, the writer excelled in school. He remarried Ketisha Ellison and they had a daughter named Makayla Taylor. After the writer graduated, he and his family returned to Detroit to begin his new life. At an Annual Conference meeting, Bishop Rochester asked if the writer was ready to pastor, and the writer said yes. Undoubtedly the Bishop felt it was not the writer's season to pastor and did not provide the writer an appointment at that conference session. The writer was crushed because he felt he deserved a church because he did what the Bishop asked of him, but no Church.

With a degree in hand, the writer sought to take control of his life and his responsibilities. He started working at a juvenile detention center in Detroit. Life had begun, but still no church to pastor; just opportunities to preach here and there. At some point, the writer got an opportunity to preach at a local Lutheran Church. The church did not have a pastor and was searching for ministers to fill their pulpit each week. The writer

filled the pulpit one Sunday and the leaders of the congregation asked if the writer could return the following Sunday.

The writer served the congregation for about a month until they asked if he would stay and be their pastor; the writer accepted the request. His thought was since the A. M. E. Zion Church was not using him, he would take his gift somewhere he could be used. The writer stayed at the Lutheran Church for about a year until he received a call from the A. M. E. Zion's Presiding Elder for that area requesting his service. The writer was asked to pastor a congregation where the current pastor left to start his own church. Although the writer loved pastoring in the Lutheran Church, his heart was in Zion. To this end, the writer requested time away from the Lutheran Church he was serving to respond to denominational demands. The writer was assigned to Blackwell A. M. E. Zion Church in Flint Michigan. After a month of preaching to a weary congregation who was unsure of the writer and his motives, the writer received a phone call from the newly appointed Bishop that he was sending someone else to lead Blackwell church. This decision devastated the writer; he felt that the church used him as a pawn. He could not figure out the problem because significant members of the congregation expressed their desire to have him as their pastor.

The Bishop informed the writer that he had promised the church to somebody else, but when another church opened up and needed somebody, he would remember him. The writer was caught off guard and did not know what to do. He called the Lutheran church to see if they still needed him. To his surprise, they told the writer they were waiting for him to come back. The writer went back proudly as the pastor of St. Olaf Lutheran Church. During his time of service, he met the presiding Lutheran Bishop

for that area who informed the writer that he needed to be educated in Lutheran doctrine and polity. The writer knew that blessings delayed will not be blessings denied!

The Lutheran Bishop informed the writer that he was aware of the things the writer was doing and felt that the writer would be a good fit for the church. The writer began the process of becoming a Lutheran pastor. Although the writer was being trained as a Lutheran pastor, he stayed in contact with his Zion cohorts that kept him abreast of what was going on. Bishop Clarence Carr of the A. M. E. Zion Church called the writer one day and said, "I got word that you are thinking about becoming a Lutheran Pastor. Son, don't do that; be patient with me and hold on, when I get something open, I will call you." The writer said to himself, "You won't hurt me again," and continued the process of becoming the pastor of St. Olaf.

When the writer would have occasions to return to his home church, the people acted as if they missed him, but the pastor treated him in such a way that he felt that the writer did not belong. For a long time, the writer would pass by his home church and wonder what was wrong with the pastor or was there something wrong with the church? About six months later, the writer received a call from Bishop Carr informing the writer that he had a church opening and he wanted him to go down and check it out.

The writer flew down to Columbia, South Carolina where he was escorted to North Charleston, South Carolina to visit with Abundant Life A. M. E Zion Church. The writer was the preacher for that Sunday; people came to hear him preach and get a feel for the potential new pastor. A very nice crowd of people greeted the writer with warm expressions; right then the writer's heart was full of compassion. Now the writer faced a conflict, he wanted to stay at St. Olaf but on the other hand, here was an opportunity to be

in Zion, close to his parent, and close to the ocean. The writer felt it was a great opportunity. After morning worship, the congregants began to question the writer about returning to be their pastor? The writer informed the church that it was up to the Bishop. While flying back to Detroit, the writer was excited about the possibility of being a Zion pastor. The writer called Bishop Carr and accepted the appointment. Transition again; his family packed up and headed to South Carolina to begin their new life.

The church the writer was appointed had been split by one of its former pastors, Bishop Brian Moore. Bishop Moore pulled out of Zion and took 98 percent of the congregation with him. Bishop Carr with his Godly judgment thought the writer was the person to bring the people back since the writer had previous experience with a church in Michigan.

The writer began a quick work, but one of his greatest mistakes was not taking the needed time to learn the culture of the church and its needs. The writer can admit, he went in like a furious lion only to find out that a lion was not needed. A cub would have done just fine. Neither did the writer know that he was appointed to a church that was scheduled to host an Annual Conference in nine months. Here he was, a new pastor, in his first A. M. E. Zion Church appointment; not knowing all the requirements of operating a church, let alone hosting an Annual Conference for approximately 600 people. The writer figured the only way to learn is to become acquainted with other pastors in the area and ask questions from seasoned veterans.

By the time September arrived, the writer was ready for the task set before him. He believed that God placed him in this position to learn and to grow, knowing that he

could depend on God for strength. God had allowed the writer to experience a similar situation in his ministry and trusting God all the away was his course.

The writer hosted the Annual Conference, and from hearsay, people appreciated the way the writer hosted. Abundant Lift worked unconditionally to see that the pastor accomplished the task set before him. Bishop Carr informed the writer that hosting the Annual Conference was only a test; God was getting him ready for what was ahead. After serving the people of God for one and a half years, Bishop Carr called and informed the writer to pack.

The writer began seminary and was driving three hours to school each way; the Bishop thought it would be better to move the writer closer to the seminary. Bishop Carr informed the writer that he did not know where he was going to send him, but prayed that God would do what's best. The writer feels that God has a funny side to his nature. God will allow people to see their blessings before they are blessed with them. Each year the Episcopal area hosted an educational program called Faith and Order, and all members of the conference are expected to be in attendance. The writer drove to Rock Hill, South Carolina; he saw a sign that said Catawba Indian Reservation Exit 2. The writer was early, and decided to go and check out the reservation. While following the directions to the reservation, the writer passed by a church called Foundation A. M. E. Zion Church. The writer said to himself, "Wow what a nice church, if Bishop is going to send him somewhere send him here!"

The writer continued on to the reservation, but on the way back, he stopped by the church and pulled in the drive way. He looked at the church and imagined being its pastor. He knew that the Bishop was moving him, but did not know where. The writer

left the church and went on to Faith and Order, and while there, the Bishop called the writer over to his table while eating lunch and said, “I still have no place yet, but I think I might have something getting ready to open, but I will let you know later.” When Faith and Order was over, the writer drove back home to North Charleston; later that night, he received a call from Bishop Carr informing him that he was being transferred to the South Carolina Conference to a church named Foundation A. M. E. Zion Church in Rock Hill. The writer was amazed because that was the same church he had drove by and sat in the parking lot and hoped for.

The writer began to pray and express thanks to God for blessing him. He informed his family that they were in transition again. The family packed up and moved to Rock Hill, South Carolina. The writer started his journey as pastor of Foundation, August 6, 2006. To the writer’s amazement, he could not believe what he saw; there were over five hundred people in attendance. The writer could not fathom the thought of being blessed so much. The people seemed to be good, honest people who loved the Lord and wanted to do ministry.

Later the writer found out that the church had been split and the former pastor had an inappropriate relationship with a member of the congregation. Not understanding why God had positioned the writer in such a place again. It seemed that his destiny landed him into churches that had been split, or hurting churches that need healing. At this particular juncture in the writer’s life, all he knew to do was preach. Although he was ecstatic to be in this mount of Zion, preaching was his only gift. He thought that this situation needed a more seasoned pastor, someone who could help the church reach a better place. The writer knew that he needed training; however, God spoke to his spirit

and said, “I put you there for a reason and if you trust me and go through this test, you will be honored among your colleagues” The writer did not understand what God meant until after he was appointed there for a year. As he began to assess the congregation, he discovered that there was significant hurt within the congregation.

Through his research, he discovered why the people were angry; pastors were not afforded a true transition period and it seemed that they were moved faster than the normal appointment tenure. Some pastors came in and violated the church with antics such as stealing money to having inappropriate relationships with congregants. The writer has seen pastors and preachers loose self respect and dignity due to having inappropriate relationships with its members.

Pastors are sent to preach the Word of God to hurting and wounded people, to people who have no direction and to help transition bad relationships into relationships of love and faith. Foundation is a church that has been crippled by people who have neglected the real purpose of the church. The purpose of each pastor is to minister hope to the hopeless; to spread the love of God to God’s people and to engage people in an abiding relationship with Christ. When the writer observed the behavior of his new congregation, he was reminded of his ministerial responsibility. Past hurts prevent future relationships from becoming fruitful because people are afraid to invest time and share personal issues to avoid being hurt. One of the writer’s greatest investments on his spiritual journey was the need to complete seminary and use his education to help and empower people. Seminary would help him obtain the resources necessary to breathe new life into the congregation as well as teach him to become the pastor that God created him to be.

The writer knows that God has called him into ministry, but calling and equipping is not always inclusive. After settling in with his new congregation, the writer continued his journey of returning to Hood Theological Seminary. Once the writer began class, a lot of his earlier teachings were shattered because of new learning and new perspectives on God. He had been taught a different theology from what his seminary professors were now teaching and instantly his theology was challenged. His initial thought was that he was in the wrong place. He was in for a rude awakening. But somehow, the writer believed that God was working to change his old ways of thinking to that of God's universal love for all of humanity. The writer was being taught to take God out of the box. He began to see God differently.

There was a professor who challenged the foundations of the writer's patriarchal male image of God. She began her class by informing students that God was gender neutral and students were not allowed to call God *He*. The writer's thoughts were turned upside down. All of the writer's life, he was told that God was male and now this female professor is telling the writer that God does not have gender. She made it policy that students were not allowed to refer to God using gender based language. Papers that were not gender neutral would receive a failing grade. The writer went to the professor's office and asked, "What was her reason for not allowing the class to refer to God in male language." She began to explain that placing gender on God is hard for some people especially those who have been physically abused by a male; to call God a male knowing that a male has abused them was not right.

She explained that placing gender on God, places God in a box that only identifies one perspective. A light came on for the writer as he received this new revelation. He

began to understand why God does not have gender and began to see the reasons why people called God *he.* The writer began to see the dominant use of male imagery of God in the Bible. He also discerned that this was possibly why men exclude women from all facets of leadership in the church. The writer began to see God and the church differently and was able to matriculate easier through seminary.

The writer graduated from Hood Theological Seminary May 9, 2009, wiser than ever; God was in control of his life and he was a product of God's divine grace and mercy. When the writer reflects on his journey, he understands that God has been directing his path from day one. The writer gives all credit to God, because without God, he would be nowhere, and through God's grace, he decided to pursue a Doctor of Ministry degree from United Theological Seminary. The writer feels that earning a terminal degree in ministry would complete the task of education, preparing him to lead, guide and direct God's people. The writer is truly dedicated to the ministry God has entrusted to him and will not allow outside distractions to cause him to fumble this gracious gift.

The Context of the Model

The perspective of a contextual and ideological thought comes from a middle class, middle age, married with children, Christian man from Rock Hill, South Carolina. The writer has been involved in many civic and church leadership positions over the years and was the pastor of a rural A. M. E. Zion church in Rock Hill, South Carolina. After being appointed to Foundation Church for the last three years, the writer can say without reservation that Foundation is one of the hardest churches to pastor on the district. If you can make it at Foundation, you can make it anywhere.

Foundation A. M. E. Zion Church lies on the outskirts of Rock Hill, South Carolina; a church that has rich historical influence and a church that has produced two outstanding bishops; Bishop George Walker Sr., and Bishop George Battle. Emphasis is on the word *produced* because each Bishop will testify that when they left Foundation, they were well informed and knowledgeable about their duties as pastor. Foundation has been in existence for over 145 years, and several pastors have come and gone since the writer arrived in August of 2006.

The writer came with no prior knowledge of the church, only to hear later the previous pastor was moved due to an inappropriate sexual relationship with a congregant. The writer began to wonder what kind of church or person would engage in such a relationship that would cause negative impact and consequences in the life of the church and the minister's life as well. The A. M. E. Zion Church is a connectional church; therefore, due to its close connections of pastors, what happens in the south is heard in the north before the sun goes down. Nothing is ever a secret in the A. M. E. Zion connectional system. The members began to inform the writer of certain pastors who have engaged in this behavior; this let the writer know that abuse and oppression were no strangers to Foundation A. M. E. Zion church. There were children inappropriately fathered by pastors in the church as well.

In assessing the church, the writer found that several other problems existed. Previous pastors took money from the church and bought personal items in the church's name. Members had taken money and put cars in the church's name. The pastors and members had engaged in confrontations that nearly turned into fights.

Immediately, the writer knew that respect for leadership had been lost. The members did not and do not take leadership serious, and in a way, that is intended. The church sees the leader as someone who is irresponsible and comes to take advantage of them. When the writer first held a leadership meeting, the members quickly reminded him of past pastor's inadequacies and shortcomings, and they were not going to tolerate this behavior anymore; it was their church and the writer had to follow their rules.

The writer hesitated momentarily knowing that any response to this statement would probably be a bad response. He felt that as the leader, this kind of language was and is very inappropriate and was unbecoming Christian conduct and character. The writer informed the leaders that he deserved a chance to do the job that God has given him and the Bishop had appointed him to.

The writer finds himself constantly having to prove his loyalty to the church. Even now, the efforts of the writer have made an insignificant impact in member's lives. He is always reminded of what other pastors have done and how the congregation refuses to allow him to repeat the process. The writer questions the church's desire to grow?

The writer has been accused of trying to do too much, but then, is ridiculed for not doing enough. The writer has given up because there seems to be no help wanted or needed. Seven years ago the members thought they needed to build a bigger church due to the inadequacies of its older facility. Today, due to the negative struggles the church faces and because of limited growth, they continue to struggle to pay the mortgage on their existing facility.

When the writer thinks about all that has been placed in his hands, he has constantly asked God, "Why did God send him to a place where there is so much hurt,

and to a place that does not give him an opportunity to be the pastor?" God's response was, "I have sent you that you might learn the operation of the church and become more aware of the duties of pastor so that when your season is over, you will know how to transition into another level of ministry."

Through the recent conflicts of pastoral transition at Foundation A. M.E. Zion church, and through the process of collaboration and consultation among pastor and people the church should emerge better prepared to receive newly appointed pastors.

What Insight Can the Writer Offer to the Discussion?

Through personal pain, suffering and testimony of experiencing a congregation that did not want a pastoral change, the writer can provide insights that can be a reasonable help for transitional pastors. There are three areas where pastors can become less stressed and become more engaged in their calling and become a blessing to whatever appointment they receive. Pastors have a general knowledge of what to expect when entering a new charge, therefore, the writer articulates three critical factors of what the newly appointed leader should do:

1. The new pastor must be patient with the new congregation.
2. The new pastor must have a spirit of humility while understanding the emotional detachment of the former pastor.
3. The new pastor must not become territorial or take attacks personally.

Patience is greatly beneficial to the success of the newly appointed pastor during an unwanted pastoral move. The newly appointed pastor must understand the grief the congregation has and even his or her own transition. That healing does not began over night. Rushing into a congregation with new ideas and visions will quickly turn the

congregation away. The writer quickly realized that although the Bishop may have appointed him to the church, his appointment did not automatically make him the church's pastor. Learning to be accepted by the people will ensure effective pastoral succession over time; having the people in the newly appointed pastor's corner does make the difference.

Being patient is a great insight; being humble and understanding that the initial resistance and pushback from the congregation is not about the newly appointed pastor. Most of the time, young pastors enter congregations with high expectations and attitudes that *it is their way or no way*. Congregations will harbor a negative spirit towards the newly appointed pastor if the ministry is about the pastor and not about the church as a whole. One must humble themselves and understand the sensitivity of a sudden change of leadership especially when there is great love and respect for the previous pastor. Entering a church as the newly appointed pastor with a spirit of humility and submissiveness is not a sign of weakness but a clear indication that you are there to serve and be a servant of the people of God. It is better to be kind and understanding than demanding; kindness will carry you a great distance.

The pastor must understand that disgruntle members will direct negative comments towards the newly appointed pastor. It is unfortunate and unbecoming, but there are congregations that will attack a newly appointed pastor with threats and other forms of ungodly behavior, however, the pastor must not take it personally. The pastor must understand that a pastoral change is an emotional challenge for the people as well as for them; therefore, pastors are sent to congregations to Sheppard and teach by example.

CHAPTER TWO

STATE OF THE ART IN THIS MINISTRY MODEL

This chapter will discuss literature relevant to the particular ministerial focus of *Conflict Resolution through Itinerant Ministry Transition,* using a narrative analysis approach. There is substantial information that relates to transitioning leadership in the life of congregations, however, the writer has found little information relating to the context of the A. M. E. Zion Church's pastoral leadership transitions. Therefore, the writer has focused on creating an understanding of the implications of conflict resolution through leadership transition. The writer cites important literature that is essential in displacing conflicts that result from unwanted transition. This literary review engages topics that relate to unwanted transitioning of pastoral leadership.

1. The pastor's personality in the life of the local church through the world's point of view.
2. The pastor's opportunity for longevity in the life of the local church.
3. The tension within the local church due to the merger of an unwanted pastoral transition.
4. The existing analysis of information that may help the process of two entities coexisting together.

The pastor's personality is a critical component in the interpersonal growth and welfare of the local church. C. Peter Wagner states, "The pastor of the church is the key

person for determining the health and growth of the congregation."[1] The pastor's influence is a major factor in the life of the local church and through their personality, the congregation takes a likeness. To be an effective leader the people must be like minded with the pastor.

If the personality of the pastor and congregation do not match, turmoil will be the outcome. In the writer's context, the previous pastor's personality had become the ethos of the local church—upon the writer's arrival and because of the prevailing ethos, transitioning into the church as the newly appointed leader was difficult. However, it is the pastor's responsibility to make sure that his or her personality does not bring negative exposure to the local church. The pastor must reflect God as they seek to serve God's people.

The pastor's role is to stimulate worth and dedication to God; not unto themselves. "If anyone would come after me, let him/her deny him/her self and follow me."[2] This scripture says that one must deny the propensity of self glorification and imitate the low and humble state of Christ. If pastors are disciples, then congregations must see God in them as they reach those who do not know the Lord.

Therefore, the importance of spiritual growth coupled with a pleasing personality assists in gaining the acceptance of a new congregation. If a mature pastor leaves a congregation and a relatively inexperienced pastor becomes their replacement, this could be detrimental to the life of the congregation. The decisions that inexperienced pastors make can and will at times become an injury to a congregation.

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[1]C. Peter Wagner, *The Healthy Church* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1996), 25.

[2]Mt 16:24 (The New Oxford Annotated Bible)

The church must be a living entity of Christ, exemplified through a pastor's teaching and personality. Dr. Britt Minshall insists that the first component of a healthy church is its theological perspective.

Minshall writes:

> Theology—The church-alive is first of all a theological institution. The Christian church that has the mandate for success is God-Centered. The talk, the songs and the minds of its people are ever God seeking and Christ-Focused. The name of Jesus is on everyone's tongue, and more than any other activity, the worship and teaching of His love and Lordship pervades every area of the life of Jesus at the center of their lives. They are verbal about their faith. Those folks usually don't invite you to their church to see the beautiful organ or the great swimming pool. You are invited to hear our preacher talk about Jesus. This is the church of personal and living faith.[3]

When the pastor is glorified the church does not form and grow; instead it becomes a bath of hatred because everyone does not accept self glorification; therefore, instead of growth, there is turmoil; only God is glorified. A pastor's longevity creates resentment through pastoral transition. Whenever a pastor is allowed longevity in the local church, the growth of that congregation comes into question. Families growing up knowing one pastor is customary for pastoral leaders who have tenure and proven leadership abilities. Myles Monroe, noted writer, talks about leadership in his book *Becoming a Leader*, describes the relationship of the pastoral leader.

Monroe writes:

> A simple and general definition of leadership includes the capacity to influence, inspire, rally, direct, encourage, motivate, induce, move, mobilize, and activate others to pursue a common goal or purpose while maintaining commitment, momentum, confidence, and courage. Leadership is the organizing and coordinating of resources, energies and

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[3]Brit Minshall, *Renaissance or Ruin The Final Saga of a Once Great Church (*St. Augustine, FL: Renaissance Institute Press, 1994), 234.

> relationships in a productive context for an intended result. In its simplest form, leadership by its very nature incorporates a clear purpose and vision which provide the fuel for inspiration, motivation and mobilization."[1]

According to Monroe, the responsibility or definition of the pastor or leader is obtained through tenure. When the pastor has been in place for a significant amount of time, he or she provides results because the local church has placed trust in the leader. The writer has found that one does not instantly become pastor. There must be time of acquaintance and reflection where the local church can see that the pastor has a heart for the people. A golden rule is that one does not become pastor until eight years of service; eight years to fully understand the context while giving the context an opportunity to see where the pastor is taking them.

The emphasis should not be on the pastor, rather on Jesus Christ. If the church is to be successful, Jesus Christ must be the focus; then, s/he would avoid what Aubrey Malphurs stresses about longevity when he states:

> More often the new pastor in a plateaued church has to earn the right to lead ministry through the change process. It may take some time to build necessary credibility with a plateaued congregation. Schaller indicated that the most effective time for leadership in the average pastorate is years five through eight…At the same time the average pastoral tenure among Protestant denominations in the United States 3.7 years Hadaway writes, "Survey results show that 25 percent of declining churches have had four or more pastors in the past decade, as compared to only five percent of growing churches." Far too many pastors unknowingly vacate their churches prior to the years of their most effective ministry. We need a new generation of authentic leaders in Christ church who are not quick to quit at the first sign of trouble but are willing to intentionally commit themselves to longer terms of ministry in service of the Savior.[2]

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[1]Myles Monroe, *Becoming a Leader, (*Bakersfield, CA: Pneuma Life Publishing, 1993), 30-31.

[2]Aubrey Malphurs, *Pouring New Wine into Old Wineskins* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1993), 118.

Time or longevity gives the pastor an opportunity to access the ministry and provides what s/he feels God is trying to do. When the pastor is moved, tension between the existing congregation and the newly appointed pastor ensues. The congregation feels a sense of lost when their previous pastor is moved and the incoming pastor had something to do with it.

H. Richard Niebuhr tried to explain the major shift that has occurred in pastoral appointments for a great number of years. His direction was that of the emerging role of the pastor director and says, "Instead of tending to the traditional spiritual presence and activities, pastors are expected to spend most of their time directing the congregation's activities and maintaining it facilities."[3]

As clergy become pastors, they take on more responsibility as it relates to church property and other formal duties. The more a congregation trusts, the more responsibility they will bestow upon the pastor. When a tenured pastor is moved, the incoming pastor has to establish a level of trust from the congregation before seeking to minister to them. This leads to the flaw in the itinerant ministry of the A. M. E. Zion Church. A. M. E. Zion Church's appointments are affixed at an Annual Conference once a year and the appointments are for one year at a time with denominational Bishops reserving the right to maintain or move pastors.

Many in the A.M. E. Zion church believe this type of assigning a yearly appointment does not allow the pastor enough time, as stated above, to do the job that is expected. It does not allow the pastor sufficient time to research and seek resolution for

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[3]Charles Cosgrove and Dennis Hatfield, *Church Conflict* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press. 1994), 42.

any existing problems. Wagner recommends that the church should keep a pastor for at least five years or more to avoid *arrested spiritual development.* Wagner states:

> Churches that are in the habit of changing pastors every three to six years usually are deprived of ongoing visionary pastoral leadership, and they will suffer the consequences. There is overwhelmingly persuasive evidence that from a long term congregational perspective, the most productive years of a pastorate seldom begin before the fourth or fifth or sixth year of the ministers tenure in that congregation. If the church is interested in long-range health and vigorous growth, however, it needs to get away from rapid turnover of ministers characteristics of so many denominations and decide to call a pastor and follow that person's leadership for an extended time period.[4]

Wagner's approach would better help the congregation appreciate longevity in a pastor's role. Pastoral succession in and of itself as stated above causes moral problems in the church. People do not like change and when it comes to church, the church does not like change. Wanted or unexpected pastoral change causes conflict as Cosgrove and Hatfield write: "The structure of the church parallels that of the natural family and that conflict in the church is just as common as in the natural family."[5]

If a person accepts the premise or challenge that conflict is inevitable, then one can see why the pastor's role in the presence of conflict is a serious topic and needs to be discussed. Cosgrove and Hatfield developed a model to assist pastors in crisis intervention.

They write:

> Conflict is unavoidable in church families. In this sense, it is natural. As all handbooks on conflict management stress, the best way to manage conflict is to treat it as something normal and bring

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[4]C. Peter Wagner, *The Healthy Church* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1996), 125.

[5]Charles Cosgrove and Dennis Hatfield, *Church Conflict (*Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press. 1994), 28.

> it out into the open where it can be handled fairly and constructively.[6]

This model should be recommended to churches that need to address conflict in regards to pastoral succession. There is no need to disregard the effects of pastoral change because it affects all parts of the church. When the church is unhealthy, all of its members are unhealthy and an unhealthy church is a dying church.

Rediger writes in *Clergy Killers*, "Conflict will persist wherever human beings gather."[7] Training should take place to inform those involved with crisis to better understand. Rediger concludes the explanation of his paradigm by saying that "Conflict management, is not a once-and-for-all activity. Spiritual discipline, celebration, worship and ministry, along with training for dealing with conflict should be continuous."[8]

Pastoral succession by its very nature causes conflict in the local church, therefore, there should be a process by which conflict is managed and engaged effectively. What happens when the church's beloved leader is moved without reason, without explanation by the Bishop? How does the church that has grown numerically, financially and spiritually continue on the path with a newly appointed pastor? The Church is at an all time high, people are coming by leaps and bounds and no change is anticipated and out of the blue the pastor is moved! The writer recalls having to stand before the congregation and inform them "This Sunday will be my last Sunday, I have been reappointed."

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[6]Ibid., 42.

[7]G. Lloyd Rediger, *Clergy Killers* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 68.

[8]Ibid.

After the pronouncement from the writer, the church went into silent mode as if someone had died. The writer did not know what additional words to say to sooth the pain of the congregation; what he did know was that he did not want to leave. As soon as worship was over, people began to approach the writer with tears in their eyes and expressed concern that the writer was being reappointed. Some even attempted to have people sign their names stating they wanted to keep him. Conflict began as some members wanted explanations from the Presiding Elder or Bishop. There must be in place some type of training to help people handle abrupt reappointments. This training must include methodologies for helping people focus on faith and the ongoing ministry to the community. Brit Minshall writes in his book, Renaissance or Ruin, the Final Saga of a Once Great Church:

> The church-alive is administered by God-centered leaders. They all share one common denominator: they are leading the congregation toward God, not towards some sort of business-centered goal. The entire infrastructure of this living leadership dynamic is based on /moving human beings, all human beings from self-centered to God-centeredness. Requirements for office reflect little though given to the *most right* person for the job and have more to do with a person whose *heart is right* for the job. These churches realize that an uncovered CPA will make a far worse church treasurer that a Jesus-loving, godly person with only a high school diploma.[9]

As the church looks to place restrictions and certain requirements on ministers, the desire to become pastors will decline in number as time goes by. This will affect churches that have grown to love the pastor who may not have all the prestigious accolades of education verses the one who may possess a wall of degrees. Understanding the context of a church's dynamics, one may conclude that a degreed pastor may not be what the church needs. Education is all grand but it does not equip the minister to become

[9]Brit Minshall, *Renaissance or Ruin,* 220.

a pastor. How to deal with the sheep will determine if one is ever to become the pastor. It is not an overnight accomplishment but one that requires a commitment.

Ralph C. Watkins writer of *Pastoral Transition: Leading your African American Church* writes about commitment for the long haul, how pastors who have been placed into certain contexts should commit to the relationship. Watkins writes:

> Transitions are difficult, painful and time consuming. People have to give a pastor permission to pastor them. New pastors must realize that while they have the title, they have to establish the relationship. They work at it: they nurture it. They intentionally love the people and the people will love them back."[10]

Understanding the role of the pastor will help the congregation understand its place. It is imperative to understand that when new pastors are assigned, people are distraught and their feelings should be taken in to consideration. Lawrence W. Ferris in his book, *Ten Commandments for Pastors New to a Congregation"* writes about the unwritten laws that apply to churches who have new pastors. Ferris writes:

> Before we can minister faithfully and effectively in a new setting, we must understand that setting in all its richness and complexity. In entering the life of a congregation, we are crossing the River Jordan. We are entering new and unfamiliar territory, and we need to search it out carefully and understand it well if we are not only to survive, but thrives, therein.[11]

James Anderson writer of *The Management of Ministry, Building Leadership in A Changing World* also writes about the roles as pastors:

> The role of the pastor within the church is a crucial concern, which can only be understood in the context of the task of the congregation itself. The role of the pastor is different for the task of the church. In order to determine the distinctive role of the pastor, and in order for the pastor to construct a framework to

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[10]Ralph C. Watkins, *Pastoral Transition: Leading Your African American Church Through* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2010), 10.

[11]Lawrence W. Ferris, *Ten Commandments for Pastors New Congregations* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 2003), 3.

> enable the congregation to define its central task, they and the church must first define why people go to church and the real demands that they make of it. In other words, the nature of the social institution determines the type of leadership and management that is needed. Failure to make the role of the parish minister relevant to the task of the church can only have one result: preoccupation with numerical success (in terms of either people or money). Examples abound of problems that have gone unsolved because of the way they have been stated or because of the lack of an integrated context in which to consider them.[12]

It is better that a congregation chooses its own pastor and have the right to either renew or release their contract. This would give the congregation the opportunity to seek the best person or the person that would be best for the ministry. So often, Bishops will send pastors into grieving churches, and what the incoming pastor does is try to fix the people before they can diagnose the problem. The writer understands the ritualistic itinerant ministry aspect as it relates to Bishops supplying pastors to local churches, but putting pastors into positions without considering the people creates major apathy in the church.

Henry Virkler writer of *Choosing a New Pastor* offers wonderful insight into the stages churches go through that have the writerity to choose its own pastor. He provides his readers the opportunity to seek a pastor that matches the church. He talks about a period of time that most churches go through after losing a pastor called the grieving process. Virkler gives eight steps that grieving congregations should follow in searching for a pastor. The writer feels that these eight steps are vital to a ministry's ability to heal. These steps also "Help the congregation say goodbye to the departing pastor and his family" which helps the reader to outline the five stages of grieving:

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[12]James D. Anderson, *The Management of Ministry, Building Leadership in a Changing World* (Nashville, TN: Discipleship Resources Editorial Office, 1993), 10.

> Several years ago Elisabeth Kubler-Ross identified five emotional stages that people often go through when they find out they have terminal illness- denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. Since the publican of her book, many observers have recognized that people may go through those stages when they are grieving for other things then just their death. Some have applied this model to the process a congregation goes through whenthey learn that their pastor is leaving.[13]

Most of the time when the congregation learns that the pastor is leaving, grief morphs into conflict that becomes out of hand. Resolution becomes unimportant to the powers that be. Unfortunately pastors who are unwanted find themselves in a critical point of trying to make the people want them. Ron Susek says,

> [The Pastor] is bound to a higher standard. [His] work is not a matter of getting problematic sheep off [his] back, but teaching people who act like wolves how to become or return to being sheep.[14]

There should be a process for the congregation to say goodbye to their pastor and a process that allows them to officially bring closure to the relationship verses finding out on the last *Sunday* they are with the congregation. The outgoing pastors also should make the transition better for the newly appointed pastor. There should never be any ill talk about the members or leadership of the church, because the incoming pastor does not know what he or she is coming into. One must take the proper precautions to prevent the incoming pastor from falling into the traps of the congregation; the outgoing pastor always knows more than the pastor coming in.

There are many models in print that can help incoming pastors be successful knowing that congregations can be very critical to their ability to lead— to carry on the

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[13]Henry. Virkler, *Choosing a New Pastor (*Nashville, TN: Oliver Nelson, 1992), 65.

[14]Ron Susek, *Firestorm: Preventing and Overcoming Church Conflict (*Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999), 136.

vision. Edwin H. Friedman, writer of *Generation to Generation: Family Process in Church and Synagogue* writes about the pastoral selection process and how congregations can be frustrating. Edwin Friedman says:

> People choose leaders because they promise to lead to a happier or more fruitful state, but after one election, the followers invariably function, either individually or in concert, frustrate their leader's efforts. This is as true with Congress as with the presidium; in Parliament as in any church or synagogue.[15]

Congregations will hold fast to the pastor's promise and once the pastor does not do what s/he says they are going to do, the congregation turns on him/her. Leadership is not defined as pastors making congregants do what they refuse to do, rather leadership is giving congregants an opportunity to be a part of something great. Myles Monroe says it very plainly in his message about relationships between pastors and their congregations. Monroe says:

> A simple and general definition of leadership includes the capacity to influence, inspire, rally, direct, encourage, motivate, induce, move, mobilize, and activate others to pursue a common goal or purpose while maintaining commitment, momentum, confidence and courage. Leadership is the organizing and coordinating of resources, energies, and relationships in a productive context for an intended result. In its simplest form, leadership is the managing of managers toward a common goal. Therefore, leadership by its very nature incorporates a clear purpose and vision which provide the fuel for inspiration, motivation and mobilization.[16]

Leadership is the key to any crisis; leaders have the ability to take a church that is in crisis and cause it to come together. John C. Maxwell in his book *Qualities of a Leader* describes the nature and character of the leader. He intentionally states what leaders do while serving the congregation. Maxwell writes, "People love leaders who share

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[15]Edwin H. Friedman, *Generation to Generation: Family Process in Church and Synagogue* (New York. NY: Guilford Press, 1985), 224.

[16]Monroe, *Becoming a Leader* , 30-31.

themselves and their life journeys. As you lead people, give of yourself; share wisdom, resources, and even special occasions."[17]

Leaders cause the congregation to reflect on Gods goodness and not the goodness of humanity. The leader must prepare the congregation for the times when pastoral transition becomes necessary. During these times, leaders prepare the congregation to continue moving in the direction that God is leading them.

John. H. Westerhoff states "The primary orientation of a congregation cannot be the activities of the church, or a great cause, or even other people, but rather an attention directed first and forever to God."[18] God must be the center of every church's identity, which says, God is first. The church must accept the responsibility for pastoral ministry. This does not mean that the church quits once the pastor is removed, but in fact, the church must continue and have faith that God will do something great on its behalf.

Bishop's and Episcopal leaders should diagnose a church before they send pastors in. Pastor must be equipped with everything necessary to help churches grow. Growing churches give God glory; dying churches allow Satan to celebrate a congregation's defeat. Satan celebrates wherever there is confusion and conflict.

Understanding there will be conflict, the question is how does the pastor deal with conflict and then, how does he find a resolution? Understanding the culture of the church would help the newly appointed pastor access the context. Ferris writes,

> Congregations like the community of which they are a part of, are cultures. All congregations have unique histories, unwritten rules, carefully observed customs, cherished traditions, spoken and

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[17]John C. Maxwell, *The* 21 *Indispensable Qualities of a Leader: (*Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Press, 1999), 11.

[18]John H. Westerhoff, III, *The Spiritual Life: Learning East and West* (New York, NY: The Seabury Press, 1982), 50.

> unspoken expectations of ministers and members, functional norms, famous and infamous characters, powerful legends, set patterns of relating to insiders and outsiders as well buildings and geographical settings."[21]

Robert Lewis and Wayne Cordeiro in their book *Culture Shift, Transforming Your Church From The Inside Out,* say there is conflict in the church and understanding the culture is vital to success. They write:

> Culture is the most important social reality in your church. Though invisible to the untrained eye, its power is undeniable. Culture gives color and flavor to everything your church is and does."[19]

Susek outlines actions for the pastor to consider in dealing with conflict resolution in his work entitled, *Behold Spiritual Leadership: Actions the Pastor Can Take.* These are:

1. Stepping Out, or providing a spiritual example for the congregation to follow.
2. Stepping In, and mediating the conflict or crisis intervention.
3. Step Over, which is asking to one to rise above the conflict or crisis.
4. Step Back, or letting the crisis burn itself out.
5. Step Down, or resign oneself from the conflict altogether.

While the steps are clearly explained, they do not explain what happens when the newly appointed pastor is unwelcomed or unwanted. The grieving process of the church which has experienced unwanted pastoral succession becomes a pivotal experience. This becomes an opportunity for the incoming pastor to compassionately utilize the pain of the congregation's grief experience as the vehicle to introduce them to a new degree of

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[21]Lawrence W. Ferris, *Ten Commandments for Pastors New Congregations* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 2003), 4

[19]Robert Lewis and Wayne Cordeiro, *Culture Shift: Transforming your Church from the Inside Out* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey Press, 2005), 3.

discipleship and a commitment. Here the newly appointed pastor has the opportunity to anchor themselves as a source of strength during times of need. The outgoing pastor earns the love and trust of the congregation by equipping them to cope with the next pastoral change.

By equipping the congregation, they can better understand the transition that takes place. No pastor willfully enters a situation that is not conducive for growth. Loren B. Mead writes about the dynamics pastors face entering a new context. Mead says:

> In most cases that we liked to think about, congregations secured new pastors only to have the new relationship to blow up almost immediately. As we studied what was going on, we found that sometimes during a previous pastorate unhealthy dynamics had built up, leaving heavy scar tissue that the new pastor would run into without knowing what was going on.[20]

When arriving to a new church, no sooner than one gets out of their car to address the congregation as the newly appointed pastor, congregants will begin to blame the old leader, as stated above, for the mishaps that were left behind. Mead tries to qualify the congregation as to its potential. Mead says:

> My own underlying theory was that I believed each congregation was being called by God to be something special and that the process of getting there depended upon their choices and decisions. I was clear that it was not my job to make them conform to my of what a good congregation was."[21]

The initial period of a new pastoral appointment should be about reaching a place where tension can be kept to a minimum so that a new relationship can be established. Mead also writes that members look at this period as a growth period. She says,

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[20]Loren B. Mead, *A Change of Pastor: And How It Affects Change In The Congregations* (Herndon, VA: Alban Institute Press, 2005), 90.

[21]Ibid., 88.

> That period of growing together, of interacting with one another, is what I meant by trajectory of ministry. The relationship retains *liveliness* to it…. If that building process really happens, the ministry will take off. If it does not happen, in a year or two you won't see a trajectory with the pastor and people growing. Instead you will see a flat line…Often what happens, the relationship deteriorates and pretty soon people start taking potshots at each other and scapegoating one another."[22]

There must never be any form of blaming or degrading due to transition because when there is blaming or degrading, there is no growth. Watkins talks about the coexistence of the pastor and the congregation and how the transition must have a common goal. Watkins writes:

> The work of the ministry is a common bond between the new pastor and the church. As they labor together in love, in the work of kingdom building, the labor brings them together. Churches that do well in transition focus on doing ministry. They focus on primarily on five things the church does: worship, fellowship, spiritual care and nurture, education and outreach and service.[23]

The pain of arbitrary reappointments emphasizes the importance of a God-centered ministry; a ministry that seeks the health rather than the harm of the congregation. Because of transition, the leader must not be afraid to fail because failing is a part of the process. John C. Maxwell writes in his book, *Failing Forward,* talks about the victory in failing. Maxwell writes:

> I define success in these terms: Knowing you purpose in Life; growing to reach your potential, sowing seeds that benefit others, the thesis of this book is that success is not a destination not a place where you arrive on day. Instead, it is the journey you take. And whether you succeed comes from what you do day to day. In other words success is a process."[24]

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[22]Ibid., 13-14.

[23]Ralph C. Watkins, *Pastoral Transition: Leading Your African American Church Through* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2010), 11.

[24]John C. Maxwell, *Failing Forward: Turning Mistakes into Stepping Stones for Success* (Nashville, TN: Tomas Nelson Press, 2000), 14.

When we think about pastoral transition, it should bring about partnerships that bring glory to God. For a partnership to be effective for a transitioning pastor, both pastor and people must not harbor negative feelings.

Mead writes in *"A Change of Pastors and How It Affects the Church"* about the seriousness of a pastor leaving. She says,

> Any congregation going through the complex issues that come when one pastor is leaving and as another comes- any such congregation knows that such a times is scary, is challenging, and is full of potential.[25]

However, unwanted transition does cause conflict throughout a congregation. The writer has tried to explain all the implications that go along with unwanted transition. He has also tried to insist that if the conflict is to be resolved, churches must have the power and discretion to pick and choose its own leader. Itinerant ministry is not understood as pastors bowing down before Bishops and agreeing to go where sent.

If pastors really understood that "Going where sent also means even if you do not want to go", there may be a decline in the A. M. E. Zion Church. If churches are properly trained on the itinerant ministry system, they will be better equipped to participate in determining who is leading them and where God is taking them. In the case of pastoral succession, it is important to focus on soul salvation and the future of the congregation. When Jesus is the focus, the power of forgiveness and love will be brought back and transition can take place.

In the next chapter the writer will attempt to outline the foundation for a Theoretical model which emerged from his hypothesis.

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[25]Loren B. Mead, *A Change of Pastor: And how it affects change in the Congregations* (Herndon, VA: Alban Institute Press, 2005), 6.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

This chapter establishes the biblical, historical and theological perspectives of conflict through leadership transition. In this chapter the writer will use significant foundational research to substantiate the importance of collaborative and consultative practices when considering the appointment of clergy to and from various congregational settings. He hopes to give valuable insight to the discussion on how to conduct an effective pastoral transition. It is the ultimate hope of the writer that this work will stimulate dialogue leading to a modified process for Episcopal leaders to follow when considering clergy deployment. The breadth of this work leads to consultation and collaboration with congregational leaders, pastors and their families when considering the affixing of appointments.

The writer believes that if pastors and parishioners mature spiritually together, a healthy and cohesive relationship will take place. When parishioners understand that others are affected by a pastoral transition, there will be less blaming and finger pointing. Healthy and cohesive relationships are what is needed in denominational concerns that practice itinerancy; it is the goals of this work to create a model that will facilitate this reality.

Biblical Foundation

The biblical foundations will demonstrate that God has established a preferred methodology that provide for effective transition in leadership. In this section, the writer will use the Old Testament books of Deuteronomy and Numbers to highlight God's transition plan.

Deuteronomy 34

One of the most noted scriptures as it relates to transference of leadership among the Israelite nation is the transferring of writerity between Moses and Joshua and the children of Israel. The story of the birth and survival of Moses has been told to generations as Pharaoh ordered that all male children born to Hebrew women be killed. Moses' mother takes her baby and places him in a small ark and puts him in the local river. Pharaoh's daughter who has compassion on him and at the suggestion of Miriam, Moses' sister allows Yocheved his birth mother to wean him so that he could be Pharaoh's daughters adopted son.

Little is known about the earlier stages of Moses youth. The biblical narrative skips straight to his incident with him killing an Egyptian taskmaster. Moses love for his people was so intense that he could not bear to watch his people beaten by the taskmasters until one day while a Hebrew was being beaten Moses struck the taskmaster and killed him. Through condemnation from his peers and Pharaoh, Moses leaves Egypt headed to Midian where he meets Zipporah, the daughter of a Midanite Priest. In Midian, Moses marries Zipporah, has a child and tends to his father-in-law's property. Moses then

has an encounter with God, and is anointed leader over the children of Israel. God sends him back to Egypt to free the children of Israel from bondage.

Moses spoke to Pharaoh and due to Pharaoh's denying the release of the people; Moses causes plagues to filtrate the land, one after the other until Pharaoh releases the people into Moses' hand. Now Moses is challenge to pastor people who really do not know him and may not trust him.

Moses like most leaders has difficulty in getting the people to see where he is leading them. They do not trust his leadership initially because they were unsure of where he was going. Moses has the responsibility of taking his people from the flesh pots of Egypt; a place of death, to a new land that God would provide; a land of promise. Moses struggles with defiance like most pastors when dealing with new congregations.

Moses leads the people of God by faith, but during the journey to the Promised Land, there is much confusion, and complaining; and Moses has to deal with each issue based on his experience. After many years, Moses completes the mission set forth by God to bring the children of Israel to the Promised Land. Unfortunately, Moses is not allowed to cross over to the new land. He has been a great leader, gave them the law, taught them about worshipping God, fed them with manna from heaven, and struck a rock to give them water to drink; but to all of his success he was to die and not reap the reward of the Promised Land.

The Bible records in Deuteronomy 34 verse 9 the rights of passage established from one leader to the next when Moses lays his hand on Joshua as the new leader. What is astonishing is that, in verse 5, Moses dies and the Israelites grieved for Moses for 30 days, weeping and moaning in the plains of Moab. Although Joshua has been appointed

as the new leader, the Israelites still cry over Moses. After years of faithful leadership, the people had become accustomed to Moses' leadership style and his acts of signs and wonders were unparalleled in the sight of all Israel.

Moses is dead; the people are unhappy, Joshua is under great pressure and the people expect him to restore their loss, re-establish their commitment to God and lead them to the Promised Land. Joshua is now faced with unprecedented responsibilities; he must walk in the shoes of Moses, their fearless leader.

One of the difficulties of a new appointment is maintaining the vision of past leadership. It is imperative to understand that God directs all called and set apart leaders. When new leadership is established, it does not automatically mean a new vision must be established. When a vision is given to an existing leader and that leader is not able to complete the vision, God will give the same vision to the leader in succession to bring to completion.

The leader in succession goes through a period of adjustment as they attempt to respond to existing priorities while simultaneously listening for a fresh word from God. "Now Joshua the son of Nun was filled with the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands on him; and the sons of Israel listened to him and did as the LORD had commanded Moses" (Dt 34:9). Being full of the spirit was the first sign of being a great leader among the people. Joshua being full of Gods anointing was the perfect antidote to dealing with Gods people. Moses laying his hands on Joshua was a sign of passing the staff of leadership to a trusted person. Moses displayed this act to inform the people that Joshua was a worthy candidate for replacing him, that he approved Joshua as the new leader.

In his reign of 25 years, Joshua's leadership completed the task that was originally given to Moses; leading the people to the Promised Land. As the leadership transitioned there was grief, disappointments and sadness, nonetheless, the children of Israel were blessed.

Numbers 14

The book of Numbers contains instructions for God's remedy for dealing with conflict resolution with pastoral transitions. Again, the saga between Moses and the children of Israel will be illuminated as the point of departure. As was previously eluded, Moses has been appointed by God to go in to Egypt and be the leader of the children of Israel. "God spoke through a chosen servant, Moses. Here was a man designated and equipped for an epoch-making task, to lead God's people from enslavement to freedom, from the old to the new. He was given unique authority to receive and communicate this revelation preserved in Scripture."[1]

Moses speaks to Pharaoh and request that Pharaoh let the children of Israel go. After denying the release of the people, God causes plagues to filtrate the land, one after the other until Pharaoh release the children of Israel into the hands of Moses who leads them away from Egypt.

"Dissatisfied and lack of trust on the part of the people are expressed by their complaints which are voiced very soon after the journey begins."[2] The children of Israel

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[1]Raymond Brown, *The Message of Numbers* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity Press, 2002), 27.

[2]Walter A. Elwell, *Baker Commentary on The Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), 42.

now are reluctant to follow Moses because his tenure with them was not long enough to gain their trust.

Pastoral leaders must be mindful that they are agents of change and transition called to transform people to serve God instead of turning away from God. The author agrees with Richard N. Boyce in his book, *Leviticus and Numbers;* Boyce writes, "Most fundamental divisions occur within Gods people arise out of fear, especially fear of the future which causes God's people turn on one another."[3]

Boyce says "When Israel shifts from camping on the way to settling in one place, even temporarily, all hell does break loose, and it is grounded in accommodation to the world. Israel and the church are called to be in the world but not of the world, so some setting of ourselves over against the rest of the world's people is in order."[4]

Although transition is tough, those involved in the transition must never forget that God is in the midst of the transition. "It was all to no purpose; they were deaf to this sound reasoning; indeed, they were exasperated by it, and grew more outrageous: But the whole assembly talked about stoning him."[5] Leadership must never show the sign of defeat but display a behavior of confidence in knowing that whatever the circumstances, God will work it out. In verse 10 as the Israelites began to talk about stoning Moses, they were not aware that God was in control. "And they were not disappointed, for

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[3]Richard N. Boyce, *Leviticus and Numbers* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), 278.

[4]Ibid, 276.

[5]The NIV Matthew Henry Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Harper Collins Publishing, 1992), 163.

immediately the glory of the Lord appeared, to the terror and confusion of those that were stoning the servants of God."[6]

In verse 5, God takes the attack or the conflict personnel and ask intricate questions about the children of Israel not believing in him. Moses fines it difficult to get the children of Israel to believe in his vision or the vision that God has given him. They did not trust his leadership initially because they could not see where he was leading them.

It is necessary to understand that anytime there is change there will be some type of resentment. Anytime you cause people to come out of their comfort zones, problems and doubt will occur. It is unfortunate that even on today where Gods promises are more prevalent than Bible times; people still have trouble with change. Change of lifestyles, change of surroundings, change of positions, and change of leadership will always cause a disgruntle environment. But Moses asks God to forgive the children for their treatment towards Gods chosen servants and God forgives.

> Now may the Lord's strength be displayed, just as you have declared: 'The LORD is slow to anger, abounding in love and forgiving sin and rebellion. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation.' In accordance with your great love, forgive the sin of these people, just as you have pardoned them from the time they left Egypt until now." The LORD replied, "I have forgiven them, as you asked."[7]

Hurting people hurt people in ways that dishonor God and they are not proud of. When this occurs, one should ask God for forgiveness knowing that God is a forgiving God.

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[6]Ibid.,165.

[7]Ibid.

Matthew 28:16-20

This scripture has been noted throughout the Christendom as the qualifying factor to the call of ministry. It represents Jesus giving writerity to his disciples to do what he no longer would be able to do. Throughout the ministry of Jesus, he dealt with the separation and the attachment of people. Whenever he healed people, there was a crowd to follow him; whenever he fed a multitude, there was a crowd to follow. Crowds were always around Jesus; they provided support for his ministry and eventually became his followers. The Great Commission serves as a transitional change of leadership in the Jewish community known as becoming followers of Christ.

Christianity did not come into existence until Jesus was gone, for it was the people that began to spread the gospel of his life as they scattered throughout Asia Minor and Europe. In retrospect, Jesus was crucified and buried in a borrowed tomb until he rose from the grave in victory over death. The disciples went to the place where Jesus told them to meet him. Exasperation was upon the disciples and followers of Jesus because they felt that he was dead.

The story of Jesus and the story of Moses and Joshua have striking similarities; Jesus led the people for three years performing one miracle after another in the presence of all who surrounded him. No one since Moses performed such miracles causing the people to become attached to Jesus. They became dependant on Jesus; he fed them when they were hungry, healed them of their diseases, protected them from murderous crowds; Jesus was their pastor, their leader; they knew him and loved him.

When Jesus chose his disciples, each one was chosen with purpose in mind. He chose each one because of the quality they possess. Even Judas was chosen because of

his talents. While traveling the road with Jesus, each experience became a teachable moment for the disciples. The hope was that each disciple would take on aspects of Jesus' character and personality. The people had to see a resemblance of Jesus in his disciples allowing the masses to trust and follow them as they trusted and followed Jesus.

Jesus prepared his disciples for ministry; to each he gave responsibilities based on their giftedness, experience and readiness to serve. Jesus instituted a command to his disciples to go and make disciples of all nations. This command compelled the disciples to be no respecter of persons but to make the Gospel of Jesus Christ available to all who would listen and desire a relationship with the Lord.

In order for mutual trust to develop and take root in the midst of pastoral change, the congregation must sense a pastor's heart for the people. Throughout the ministry of Jesus, you would find Jesus meeting people's needs. He made himself available for any and everybody who desired an audience with him. Jesus could have turned people away, refused to see them or said no, but he had compassion and a heart for people. Through teaching, Jesus made sure that his disciples were all aware of God's plan to reappoint him to a heavenly position from his current earthly ministry. As time drew near for his departure, Jesus was able to strengthen the resolve of his disciples for their journey ahead.

Jesus institutionalized teaching as a necessary and ongoing part of ministry knowing that he would not always be a physical presence on earth. Jesus knew that his departure would create a void because of attachment, but he also knew that there comes a time when all leaders must be replaced in order to meet the ever changing demands of God's people. After his crucifixion, many began to lose hope; some who followed him

went back to their previous craft. The ministry of Jesus provides the example of pastors as servant leaders; pastors must be able to meet a variety of needs because the needs of the people are various. Jesus had been a healer, a provider and the hope for years to come.

Jesus says to the disciple; train them as I have trained you. Jesus is holding the disciples accountable for people left in their care. Jesus says to them, “All power has been given unto me, and I in turn, place my power in your hands. You will have power to do all that I have asked you to do.”

Joshua had been given the reign as leader of the Israelites and because God was with him, he led the people of God to a place designed for them to live. Moses had been the leader for over 40 years and even when they struggled, Moses remembered that God was with him. They accomplished the mission God set out for them and they completed the task. Before Jesus transitioned, he empowered his disciples to be ministers of the Gospel; to not lose focus and go beyond human boundaries to bring people to a place of change in their lives, a place of salvation. As leaders we too must be willing to transition through societies, regions and countries without reservation to bring people to Christ. It is natural to be consumed with the frills of the church, but pastors should never become so infatuated with frills that they fail to see the mission and purpose that God has for their lives.

Theological Foundation

Theology is not universal language about God. Rather, it is human speech informed by historical and theological traditions written for particular times and places.

Theology is contextual language—that is, defined by the human situation that gives birth to it. No one can write theology for all times, places and persons.

Therefore, when one reads a theological textbook, it is important to note the year of its publication, the audience for whom it was written, and the issues the writer felt compelled to address."[1] Before entering seminary, what the writer believed about God was based on what his mother taught him. A portrait of a white Jesus hanging on the wall in the house, that's all the writer had to pray to at night before he went to bed. As he walked past the picture, he had to bow in reverence to the white Jesus as if he could see them through the picture. Their actions were watched by a white Jesus portrait and their mother often talked to the portrait as if it was going to speak back.

To better understand theology the writer enrolled in a class that quickly opened his eyes to new information. The class was called liberation theology. His mine began to see theology from a different perspective. Not the theology that portrayed God as a white man who looked down on Black people. Different, because throughout his life, his learned interpretation of God and the Bible was that every person was of European decent and that Blacks or Afro-Americans were not good enough to be a part of the Bible; that Jesus looked down on *poor old Blacks*.

The writer approached his mother with his new found learning only to be saddened because she rejected what he was learning. She would reply "All of my life I was told Jesus was white and as long as I live I will believe that he is white." The writer does not think it is a bad thing to say Jesus is white as long as it is equally acceptable to say that Jesus is Black, Asian, Hispanic or any other nationality. God is a God for humanity and not for one particular race. To literally discriminate, harm and hurt other

[1]James Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation* (New York, NY: Orbis Books, 1986), vii.

cultures and nationalities is surely not the Christianity the writer was learning about. If Christ was born in a region of the world where the hues of the people revealed darker pigmentation, it was clear to the writer that the Jesus that is described in the Bible was the not the same one on his mommas wall. And if his presuppositions were correct, the writer wondered, where white Jesus came from. Why was there no Black Jesus on their wall? Were Black people unworthy to be included in biblical history? Even religious television programs portrayed whites in leading roles and Blacks as slaves and servants. Why did Jesus have blue eyes, pale skin and long hair in pictures but described differently in the Bible? These were the some of the critical questions the writer asked himself that would eventually prompt him to do research. The writer wondered how come Blacks have always been the epitome of ridicule, negativity and discrimination by the people who are supposed to be Christ like.

From the discovery of America to the 21st century, Blacks are challenged with discrimination in all facets of society. As it relates to religious practices, the denomination of the writer was birthed out of religious discrimination. The writer is affiliated with the A. M. E. Zion Denomination, a religious organizations that was birthed out of John Street Methodist Church New York, New York, the oldest Methodist Church in America. John Street Methodist Church sought to deprive Blacks the liberty to worship and practice their religious freedom.

They could attend worship only if they sat in the balcony and watched; and if by chance they wanted to be baptized, it was a private service held for Blacks only but controlled by whites. They were not allowed to take communion alongside whites, but after all whites were finished and most of the time they ran out of Communion and

therefore blacks were often overlooked. During baptism of Black children, white pastors arbitrarily give the children names they felt the child was worthy to be called.

After numerous attempts to become a part of the church the Blacks that attended sought religious freedom to worship in their own style; they started the A. M. E. Zion Church and began worship at Mother A. M. E. Zion Church in New York. Throughout history, the A. M. E Zion Church has tried to continue its rich cultural existence by linking people with the idea of freedom in worship; today the church carries the nickname, *The Freedom Church.*

As the writer began to research theology and how theology fits into society, he asked himself a question, "Where does a Black man fit into a modern day culture?" Where is the Black man in the Bible, and how does one transition from what they have been taught to a theology of wholeness. This was the question; the writer needed to determine if Blacks had a chance to live out what they really believed. To transition to their true identity as a people close to God.

The writer feels that history has been recorded to keep Black people socially deprived to better the advancement of other races. When the writer thinks about slavery and how slaves were not allowed to read and learn, the writer believes it was to keep them mentally and educationally deprived. All of these perceptions caused the writer to investigate theology to honestly see if Blacks can transition from what they were taught to what they believe.

Doing research the writer was introduced to a term called Liberation theology, a theological movement, popular in the Third World, which interprets salvation, particularly as seen in the Exodus, in political terms. Therefore, the tendency is to believe

the church's primary purpose is to assist in changing oppressive social, economic, and political structures. The writer began to think to himself that if God is a God for all, then surely God can be a God of the oppressed.

According to the writer, oppression is a term for people who are discriminated against the most; minorities. Minorities have suffered for many years from hanging, lynching and other heinous crimes that have ripped Black culture of its identity. Liberation Theology is closely bound with this new presence of those in the past who were always absent from our history. They have gradually turned into active agents of their own destiny; beginning a resolution process that is changing the condition of the poor and oppressed world.

"Liberation theology (which is in expression of the right of the poor to think out their own faith) has not been an automatic result of oppression and the changes it has undergone. It represents rather an attempt to accept the invitation of Pope John XXIII and the Second Vatican Council and interpret this sign of the times by reflection on it critically in the light of the God's word. This theology should lead us to a serious discernment of the values and limitations of the sign of the times."[2]

The writer began to find value in saying that most Back people are poor and if we are the poor then God must be the God of the poor! And if God is the God of the poor, then there is a special bond between Blacks and God.

The writer used this analysis to state that blacks are the people of God and if we are to rightfully claim the place we were destined to be then transition must take place.

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[2]Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology Of Liberation, History, Politics, and Salvation* (New York, NY: Orbis Books, 1988), xxi.

There must be a shift in our mindset that would inspire the oppressed to understand that we have a God who loves us and is concerned about our well being.

To become liberated persons must change the way they think and position themselves to become equal with society. How do people change their mindset? How does a race become equipped to teach others about this transition of liberation theology?

With much research and reading the writer was introduced to a giant in Black Liberation theology, Dr. James Cone. Dr Cone is a noted theologian who translates transition in Black theology to the Black community. James Cone became the preeminent Black theologian in the United States and the leading exponent for what is termed *Black theology.* The decade of the 1960s was a period of great social and racial turmoil in the United States.

The Civil Rights movement of the early and mid 1960s with its model of passive resistance, led by the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., became militant and separatist when Malcolm X, a charismatic leader introduced a revolutionary approach to the Civil Rights. *Black Power* became the clarion call for this more radical segment. The time was vital for Black theologians to articulate a new vision of theology that would be geared to the Black Power movement.

The writer introduces Black Liberation Theology as a way to encourage the Black community to transition from Eurocentric Christianity to a modern day Afrocentric involvement. Christian theology is a theology of liberation. It is a rational study of God in the world in light of the existential reality of an oppressed community, relating the forces of liberation to the essence of the Gospel, which is Jesus Christ. Therefore, the sole reason for Christian theology is to articulate the meaning of Gods activity in the world, so

that the oppressed will recognize that their inner thrust for liberation is not only consistent with the Gospel but is the Gospel of Jesus Christ?

"There can be no Christian theology that is not identified unreservedly with those who are humiliated and abused. In fact, theology ceases to be a theology of the Gospel when it fails to arise out of the community of the oppressed."[3]

Christ signifies the transition of leadership for an oppressed people those whom have been discriminated against. Christianity is not limited to only one race or population; Christianity is for all. Cone tries to empower low self esteem Blacks who feel that God has forgotten about them. White Christians did the very same thing by using Christianity and a tool of control. White Americans try to convince themselves that they have been innocent onlookers of that history, but Black Americans evaluate the history of this country differently.

White Americans have pursued two principal courses of action with regard to Black people. First, they decreed that Blacks were outside the realm of humanity, that Blacks were animals and that their enslavement was best, both for them and for society as a whole. Second whites decided to integrate Blacks into white society.[4] What better way to transform a person's mind and to make them feel worthless is to treat them like they were nothing, make them see no value in themselves. The writer feels that liberation theology takes a person who is wounded and empowers that person to see value in themselves. To feel a since of importance.

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[3]James Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation* (New York, NY: Orbis Books, 1986), 1.

[4]Ibid,. 13.

James Cones identifies the importance of the transition of the mind of Blacks to take on a different aspect of theology, to see God from a different perspective and then to transition from what they have been taught to transform their minds to receive identify.

Because Black theology is survival theology, it must speak passion consistent with the depths of the wounds of the oppressed.[5] The transition of liberation theology causes Black consciousness, and involves the Black experience. When there is no Black experience there is no Black identity and because there is no identity there is no say to what is profound.

"Because Blacks have come to know themselves as Black, and because that blackness is the cause of their own love of themselves and hatred of whiteness, the blackness of God, and everything implied but it in a racist society, is the heart of the Black theology doctrine of God. There is no place in Black theology for a colorless God in a society where human beings suffer precisely because of their color."[6]

The transition of liberation theology causes one to see the potential possibility of change, and when there is a new movement, understanding and acceptance becomes an infallible tool. Blacks can identify existence and proclaim a rightful place in society. Without proper identification the history and culture of Black Americans will be lost.

The presence of eight hundred white men made the writer realize that Black existence cannot, indeed must not, be taken for granted. White people did everything within their power to define Black reality, to tell Blacks who they were—and their definition, of course, extended no further that their social, political, and economic interest. They tried to make Blacks believe that God created Black people to be white

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[5]Ibid., 17.

[6]Ibid., 63.

people's servants. Blacks, therefore, were expected to enjoy plowing their field, cleaning their houses, mowing their lawns, and working in sawmills.

"And when we showed signs of displeasure with our so-called elected inferior status, they called us *uppity niggers* and quickly attempted to put us in our place."[7] The writer often questions the insight of whites as if they really believe that Blacks were made to be their slaves? There has to be some justification for them to feel this belief, there has to be some type of religious documentation that would support their position. From one perspective, people will use Genesis 9 to support their idea. In 1964 Senator Robert C. Byrd stood on the floor of the Senate to prove that biblically slavery was a commandment of God, that Blacks were cursed by God to serve white people.

In using Genesis 9 to support segregation and the continuance of Jim Crow, Byrd was relying on the so-called *Curse of Ham.* According to the mythology that developed around this story, Noah cursed his son Ham to perpetual slavery. Ham, according to Genesis 10, was the founding father to Africa. Thus, Africans are an accused race predestined by God to inferiority and slavery.[8]

When one defines inferior, it means to be lower than others. If the Bible says that we all are created equal in the sight of God, then how can whites not see Blacks as equal?

The writer can remember reading as a child, the Declaration of Independence with a sense of identity with all men and with a sense of pride: "We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights; that among them is life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

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[7]James Cone, *God of the Oppressed* (New York, NY: Orbis Books, 1975), 2.

[8]David M. Whitford, *The Curse of Ham in the Early Modern Era*: *The Bible and the Justifications for Slavery* (Vermont: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2009), 2.

But the writer also read in the Dred Scott decision, not with pride or identity, but with a feeling of inexplicable absurdity, that Blacks are not human.[9] If Blacks are not humans then what are they?

Dr. Cone places Christianity as the premier transition tool to helping people understand that Christianity is a common meter that causes races to become equal. Christianity begins and ends Jesus—his life, death, and resurrection. He is the essence of Christianity. Schleiermacher was not far wrong when he said that "Christianity is essentially distinguished from other faiths by the fact that everything in it is related to the redemption accomplished by Jesus of Nazareth."[10]

If Black people are to transition their thoughts, they must see Jesus for who he was and who he is for Black people. Black people must see the work of Jesus as one of liberation, changing the paths that have been set forth. Black people must be willing to engage their minds for change that will better their circumstances to empower the future that lies ahead.

Cone makes valuable points about theology in the church. No event expresses this transcendent truth more clearly that Sunday worship in the Black church. Just as there is a danger in overemphasizing politics in Black theology, so is there danger in placing too much stress on spirituality. Black spirituality can be misused and distorted. "Christian Faith and Political Praxis" represents the writer's attempt to articulate an appropriate balance between faith and politics, between the worship of God in church and the liberation of persons from injustice in society. "Unless Christians work out the proper

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[9]Cone, *Black Theology and Black Power*, 9.

[10]James Cone, *A Risk of Faith: The emergence of a Black Theology of Liberation* (Boston: MA: Beacon Press, 1999), 7.

balance between faith and social practice, they will inevitably fall victim to Marr's challenging critique of religion as the opium for the people."[11]

When the church becomes the focal point of the community it can become a source of identity, but so often, the Black church has taken the back seat to the issues that plague its community. If the church is to make an impact then Black power or Black theology must be at the focal point of existence. The church must remove itself from the shadows of oppression and teach empowerment to its people. The church must teach the relevance of transition as a gateway to success. One cannot think of themselves lower than anyone else; there must be equality for all as the basis for unity community.

As the Black church grows, it must become liberated from all involvement of white supremacy and involve itself in a transitional moment in transforming the lives of its people. Although transition is hard and often avoided, transition must began with its leadership first. Leaders must first grasp the seriousness to empower the people to understand the demand for Black Liberation Theology. If Black children desire to belong in an egocentric society, they must be taught Black liberation Theology as a way of balancing their choices. If the Black community transitions through liberation theology it will have transformed oppressed people to an empowered people of God.

Historical Foundation

"Every Four Years, many Americans invest their hopes in an electoral process that does not deserve their trust. These voters hope that a savior can be installed in the White House—someone who will raise wages, roll back war and militarism, provide universal and adequate health care, rebuild the nation's infrastructure, produce high

[11]James Cone, Speaking The Truth…, 2.

paying jobs, fix the environmental crisis, reduce inequality, guarantee economic security and generally make daily life more tolerable." [12]

As Barack Obama presented himself as a candidate for the office of President of the United States, there was plenty of concern for him, not as a man but his culturally fitness for the job. Some would question his intent knowing America's history regarding racism. The possibility became plausible, despite America's tortured racial history for two reasons. The first is that white America, since the sixties, has undergone a moral evolution away from racism so transformative that there is a desire in political circles to see a truly qualified Black person in the White House.

Secondly is Obama himself. "To begin with, he is blessed with remarkable political talent. It is no accident that the word *Kennedyesue* so often trails in his wake. He is tall, elegant as well as eloquent and seemingly comfortable in his own skin."[13]

History recalls the change of political power from every political spectrum, but none is more captivating than the change of the oval office. Throughout American history the change of the oval office has brought many obstacles and challenges. From the signing of the Declaration of Independence, the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation, assassinations of sitting presidents and the most historical event in American history, the election of the 44th president in succession, President Barack Obama. Most people may look at this event as a normal change of power, but history has been made by President Barack Obama by becoming the first African-American to be elected.

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[12]Paul Street, *Barack Obama and the Future of American Politics* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2009), ix.

[13]Shelby Steel, *A Bound Man* (New York, NY: Free Press Publishing, 2008), 11, 12.

When one reaches deep into America's history of politics never in our recorded history can such a race be more electrified than the election of Barack Obama because it was a momentous plight for African Americans. History records the hateful acts of slavery upon Africans bought to American; and now, for a descendent of enslaved Africans to reach this plateau is major a transition. The writer says major transition because as with any change of power, there will be transition; in this case, there is major transition.

Racial discrimination is another factor in the difficulty of electing African-Americans to statewide offices. The impact of racial bigotry is hard to measure, but the research of political science professor Phillip Klinkner estimates it at five percent of the vote. In pre-election surveys, Black candidates are sometimes ahead by as much as ten percent but come election time, Black candidates may lose or win by a very narrow margin. This was Virginia Governor Wilder's experience in 1989. "Whites would not publicly admit to being racist, but when the curtain was closed to vote, the racial baggage that has plagued this country made them question Black political power and leadership."[14]

President Obama used his upbringing to propel him higher than any other person could have imagined. He allowed the skepticism of him not being Black enough to identify his equal support to all people. The transition of being a biracial child compelled him to try and belong.

"It remained necessary to prove which side you were on, to show your loyalty to the black masses…. The constant, crippling fear that I did not belong somehow, that

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[14]Martin Dupuis and Keith Boeckelman, *Barack Obama The New Face Of American Politics* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2008), 77.

unless I dodged and hid and pretended to be something I was not I would forever remain an outsider, with the rest of the world, black and white , always standing in judgment…..Was that all that had brought me to Chicago, I wondered—the desire for such simple acceptance."[15] Learning to transition from an upscale private school in Hawaii, a decent household and grandparents who placed values in him negated his opportunity to simply be associated with those whom were less fortunate.

The transition to belong pushed Obama's will to change a generation of people to be able to live a life of inclusiveness. Leaders too often wear masks to get the support that is needed to reach their desired goals. Will President Obama have to wear a mask to blend in and belong to his white constituents? Can a Black ask for power at the level of the American presidency without wearing a mask, without reassuring whites that they will be given the benefit of the doubt—without lessoning the anxiety inherent in being white today? Is there real power for Blacks without some negotiation with white innocence? And what would a Black who was neither a challenger nor a bargainer look like?[16]

"Many white Americans have negative perceptions of black Americans, yet hold positive images of newly arrived African or West Indian immigrants. Native Blacks are viewed as more prone to crime and less responsible, while new Black immigrants are seen as hard working and pursuing the American dream."[17]

Early Americans had a dream of enslaving Africans and treating them less than human. So what is the American dream? President Obama's vision of the American

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[15]Steel, A Bound Man, 33.

[16]Ibid., 129.

[17]Dupuis and Boeckelman, Barack Obama The New Face…, 77.

Dream transcends individualism and economic success, implying that each of us has an obligation to keep the dream alive for everyone. In his many commencement addresses, he almost always calls on graduates to look beyond wealth as a measure of the success of their lives. For example, in his 2005 address to the graduation class of Knox College, he told them, "You can take your diploma, walk off stage, and go chasing after a big house, and the nice suits, and all other things that our money culture says you can buy. I hope you don't—focusing your life on making a buck show poverty of ambition. It asks too little of yourself."[18]

When we make the so called American Dream which is associated with wealth and power and use it to only help ourselves, we really discriminate against each to other. Transition always opposes the challenge of newness. As Obama is faced with the challenge of creating equality amongst all people, there will be opposition. The American Dream is simple—take all you can and leave none for anyone else. Obama connects the ideas of community and equality to the American Dream. Communitarian values provide a foundation and egalitarian beliefs insure that all can attain it.

Thus Obama see individualism, community and equality as woven together in the fabric of the American Dream.[19] Transition involves the role of power, and being equal. When transition occurs it's important for the leader to establish a level working atmosphere. Obama presented equality for everyone that he would be no better than everyone else; that everybody was a part of the change.

As President Obama was campaigning, and because Afro-Americans are discriminated against, they argued that his name would play negative in his campaign.

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[18]Ibid., 103.

[19]Ibid., 105.

Obama's exotic last name did not sound like a traditionally American Black name, and he consequently did not have to overcome some of the bigotry that other Afro-American candidates experience. When Obama was associated with Black public officials like Jesse Jackson, Jr., however, his standing with white suburban and exurban voters diminished. Nevertheless, with Chicago's deep roots, one commentator suggested Obama would do better with the last name of O'Bama.[20] Most of our names signify something about us and in most cases our ethnic background. With a unusual last name for an American Black man, he was related to Arabs.

What people do not know about a person will cause speculation, and when people speculate, false accusation begins. Transition into position is always difficult when people do not have information or have false information. Before Obama began to really make national news, political assassination began with his name. He has been accused of ties with America's enemy Osama Bin Laden. He has been accused because of his name to have ties with Islamic nations and terrorists.

Barack Obama represents a new age of African American public officials. The background of Black politicians has changed dramatically, and Obama is the face of the next generation. Older Black politicians tended to be from segregated communities and local political cultures. Because of the Civil Rights movements, younger Black politicians experienced a more integrated world, though hardly one without discrimination.[21]

With this transition of power into the oval office more and younger Black African Americans now have more of a chance to get involved in politics. With this new

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[20]Dupuis and Boeckelman, Barack Obama The New Face…, 77.

[21]Ibid., 77.

transition, change takes place and when there is change there are new dimensions of leadership to be formed. Transition involves change, and change simply mean putting people into the best position for which their ability to handle.

According to Public Broadcasting Station (PBS) commentator Bill Moyers, "Obama represents a generational metaphor. He opens up new gates so that younger people can feel that there's opportunity for them, that they can come in with him and create possibilities."[22]

"On December 10, 2006 in his first speech in New Hampshire, Obama said, "America is ready to turn the page. America is ready for a new set of challenges. This is our time. A new generation is prepared to lead." Obama declared, "Let us be the generation that reshapes our economy to compete in the digital age…and as our country changes, let's be the generation that ensures our nations workers are sharing in our prosperity…Let's be the generation that ends poverty in America…Let's be the generation that finally tackles our health care crisis…Let's be the generation that finally frees America from the tyranny of oil…Let's be the generation that makes future generation proud of what we did here."[23]

Transition will cause the need for change but change that causes growth and productivity. Create a new generation of believers of change. At the Selma Voting Rights March 2007, Obama expressed his sense of changing generations in biblical terms: "I thank the Moses generation; but we've got to remember, now, that Joshua still had a job to do. As great as Moses was, despite all that he did, leading the people out of bondage,

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[22]John K. Wilson, *Barack Obama, This Improbable Quest* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2008), 11.

[23]Ibid., 1.

he didn't cross over the river to see the Promise Land. We're going to leave it to the Joshua generation to make sure it happens. There are still battles that need to be fought; some rivers that need to be crossed."[25]

Moses declared Joshua to be the leader of the children of Israel, and because the people saw the relationship of Moses and Joshua they accepted the newly appointed leader. It is important that leaders who are transitioning to new appointments should have a working relationship with the previous leader. Potential problems can be addressed to the new leader by the former leader and the new leader can be prepared as they come. Unfortunately in some cases leaders walk into blind situations and find themselves distraught by problems they are unable to solve.

Transition does not exclude but includes. President Obama realized that he was not alone in this matter that there was people who may not had the same religious views, sexual views and even political views; they were allowed the same opportunity as those that agreed. Transition involves humanity and its right to belong.

We all may not look the same nor have the same appetites in life but we are of the same genetic makeup, we all bleed red blood, and bleeding red blood makes us all one. How we treat each other shows our real qualities as people. How well we treat those we are leading describes our skills for transition.

The President will not transform racially motivated people and people of resistance but through transition he will place a sense of hope for all people. As commander in chief he has to modify society through transition; a transition of change to better the American people with a sense of hope for the Black community.

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[25]Ibid., 23.

A Black Commander in Chief who is also the nations intellectual in chief will inspire African Americans not only to celebrate intelligence but also to expect nothing less. “We will demand intelligence from our pastors. We will demand intelligence from our athletic stars. We will demand intelligence from our entertainers. We will demand intelligence from our politicians. We will demand intelligence from our community activists. We will demand intelligence from the various ethnic groups with which we share this nation. We will demand intelligence from each other.”[28]

The writer has tried to research the impact of transition through the eyes of President Barack Obama and how it affects us all. His transition from a biracial background to cultural identity has proven that through it all, one must endure; there is no boundary that together people cannot reach. Obama’s leadership skills make transition easier because his level of enthusiasm pushes people to want to follow the direction in which he is leading.

Americans are accustomed to the same type of Presidential leadership; however, President Obama has not changed who he is to fit status quo expectations. As leaders undergo transition and take on new leadership positions, they must also hold on to the principles and values that establish their historical character. President Obama historically has proven that values and morals will carry a person far and because of his values, he has become the President of the United States of America.

Whether it is his personality or his persona, he has become a great man of respect. “The qualities of an individual that allow him or her to lead can include experience and Senator Obama has served admirably on the State Foreign Relations Committee. But the

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[28]Jabari Asim, *What Obama Means….For Our Culture, Our Politics, Our Future* (New York, NY: Harper Collins Publishing, 2009), 217.

most important qualities of a good leader are integrity, character and judgment. These are the qualities we need in our next president. In my navel career I have has the opportunity to assess many men and women on their potential to lead in times of peace, war, or crisis. Senator Barack Obama is a leader. He will lead America well." Admiral John, Nathman United States Navy (Retired)"[29]

Leading America is what President Obama is doing and he is doing it by transitioning our society for change; change that encompasses all people. His insistence on inclusiveness is untold, and because he has no boundaries, he is transforming the White House as we knew it, to be a place where a person lives to transition every aspect of inequality.

A leader's emphasis should be about change and how to establish a climate and culture for ongoing and effective change through transitional leadership. Life has many challenges, how challenges are handled will define an individual's character. How we make people feel in the transition will help position leader toward a higher degree of success.

Transition is not easy and it affects the hold family and those that are associated with the transition. Witnesses of Barack Obama being sworn in as the first African American president witnessed what their fore parents died to achieve; a greater quality of life for succeeding generations. Through collaboration and consultation with the American people, President Obama has proven that effective transition is possible despite perceived resistance.

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[29]Barack Obama, *Change We Can Believe In* (New York, NY: Crown Publishing, 2008).

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, the writer will define the methodology used to test the presuppositions that emerged as a result of synergy between writer and context to form the basis of a cohesive problem statement. It is proposed by the writer that consultation and collaboration with pastors and congregations be included in the process of making pastoral appointments within the A. M. E. Zion denomination to reduce conflict, tension and unwanted pastoral relationships. This proposed methodology will address the problem statement by first identifying the problem, then presenting the method to address the problem.

On January 23, 2010, Bishop Kenneth Monroe assigned the writer to Robinson A.M.E. Zion Church. The writer began his tenure as pastor to a new congregation. The problem to be solved by this project model deals with the tension that is accompanied by unwanted and unexpected pastoral reassignment. The writer's hypothesis is that if a process of consultation and collaboration with pastors and congregations prior to making an appointment is established, a reduction in unhealthy and ineffective appointments will result.

Once a church rebels against an appointed pastor, a change will simultaneously occur in the vitality and sustainability of the local church making it difficult for congregational growth and viability to occur. When churches rebel against its pastor, a

reduction in pastoral effectiveness will result. Instead of leading the congregation to disciple and evangelize new members, pastor's resort to surviving and protecting their family from being hurt.

Survival mode causes the church to neglect its primary function as identified in the Great Commission. The opportunity for a thriving ministry can turn to a place of hostility; a place where members refuse to accept new leadership, placing the pastor and the congregation at a standstill. Whenever harmony is broken between church leaders and its congregation, it becomes a less effective place of worship, making it difficult for the pastor and congregation to embrace each other.

To provide a solution for pastors and congregations when unwanted appointments occur, the writer has chosen a qualitative research methodology to engage the congregation in developing a process that establishes a positive relationship between pastor and people. The basis of this methodology is to bring the pastor and the congregation together so that Christ might receive the glory in the midst of a healthy community of faith.

The qualitative method will ensure a collective involvement which will bring about inclusivity and ultimate harmony. The qualitative method is the most effective tool for this project because it allows for personal interactions and the establishment of suitable relationships. The qualitative approach seems to be valuable in this particular context verses quantitative because this model tends to lend itself towards narrative descriptive analysis (case study) with the writer and participants actively involved in the study.

Myers states:

> Research done within such professions primarily relies primarily upon observation, interviewing, journaling, and the use of documents. It is not coincidental that these skills also lie at the heart of ministerial training. Such research usually results in the presentation of a narrative description (a case study). Tools are often chosen for use in this research process on the basis that they can be entered into by both the therapist and the client; for example, both the client and the therapist might keep personal dream journals from which the client reflects with the therapist, and the therapist critically reflects with a supervisor on both client and therapist-generated dreams.[1]

The above paragraph adequately supports the methodology of research that was applied to this project proposal to test the hypothesis. This approach not only involves members of the church and context, but the writer's full participation as well.

Project Methodology

A pre-test and identical post-test questionnaire was used to measure levels of growth as a result of this project. This approach was used to determine the most accurate data by which to analyze the outcome of the project. The questionnaires assisted the writer in determining whether or not the research proved the hypothesis. The results of this process and project will become effective in helping Ecumenical leaders, denominational supervisors and pastors establish dynamic relationships with their respective congregations.

The professional and contextual associates helped with the project research. Together they conducted six workshops sixty minutes in duration with members of the congregation. The research was designed to help measure the outcome of the field experience, or the writer's hypothesis.

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[1]William R. Myers, *Research in Ministry* (Chicago, IL: Exploration Press, 1997), 120.

The workshops were conducted by a professional associate who also taught effective pastoral transitioning into the local church. With the professional associate leading the process, it allowed the pastor to work side-by-side with the congregation in uncovering the best practices for successful pastoral appointments.

Each workshop was conducted every Wednesday beginning April 20th and concluding May 25th 2011. The workshops began promptly at 6:00 P. M. and ended at 7:00 P. M. The workshops were conducted at Robinson A.M.E. Zion Church, Cheraw, South Carolina.

CHAPTER FIVE

FIELD EXPERIENCE

The field experience was and enlightening experience for both the pastor and the congregation. The results of this ministry project greatly changed the context making fellowship and worship between pastor and people more meaningful. The writer hopes the results gleaned from this project will assist in making critical adjustments in the appointment process of the A.M. E. Zion church. There were six workshops conducted from April 21st to May 25th from 6:00 PM to 7:00 PM at Robinson A. M. E. Zion Church. What follows is a brief examination of what took place during the workshops.

First Session April 21st

At the beginning of the workshop the writer passed out a questionnaire with ten questions pertinent to the project model. The workshop began on Wednesday, April 21st at 6:00 PM; there were twelve people in attendance. After explaining how the evening would proceed, the questionnaire was distributed to the program participants. The program participants were instructed to take the questionnaire home, read each question carefully, pray about their responses then truthfully answer each question to the best of their knowledge.

The first workshop allowed the writer to interact with the program participants allowing them to see that he was not the enemy and that his appointment to their church was based on the polity of the A. M. E. Zion Church. During the first workshop, the

writer used the Bible to educate and engage the program participants on the necessity of pastoral transitions.

Second Session April 28th

The second workshop allowed the writer and program participants an opportunity to review the pre-test questionnaire. This session began with the program participants being separated into three groups. When the groups were established, participants compared their answers and then answered them individually. Due to time constraints, the participants only answered the first three questions. In this session, the participants engaged in conversation with the pastor to get his perspectives and experiences regarding pastoral appointments and the transitional process. From this exchange, the participants realized that appointments and pastoral transition affects pastors, their families, the congregation and potential visitors and guest. The contextual associates who assisted the writer explained to the participants that conflicts do arise from pastoral appointments. They further explained that pastoral changes can be good, and when they occur, the congregation should focus on the hand of God at work for the benefit of the church.

Third Session May 5th

By the third session, program participants seemed to be comfortable with the writer as they begin to acknowledge a heightened understanding of the itinerant process of the A. M. E. Zion Church. Once aware of the itinerant process, the program participants were able to see the writer as an integral part of healing for the congregation and that healing could not take place apart from him. One participant said to the writer "We thought you requested to come here because you heard we had money." This

member was frustrated because she felt that the writer's purpose or reason for being at the church was to use and abuse the members. Through her participation in the workshops she understood that the process of itinerant ministry was the reason pastors come and go. She grew to understand that the pastor is only a servant of the Lord, and wherever the Lord sends the servant, he or she must go. In this session, it was agreed that even though a defined process is in place around pastoral appointments, church members will have affinity for certain pastors over others. However, the consensus among the participants was that every pastor is a servant of God to be used for God's glory and the church's benefit.

Fourth Session May 12th

During the fourth session, the process began to grow intense. One of the participants who spoke very little through the first three sessions was excited about speaking, so the writer questioned his motives. As the session progressed, the discourse from this particular participant seemed as though it was induced from an outside source. He explicitly challenged the writer with regards to the writer's expectations of the membership as it relates to seniors. While the question was not a part of the planned discussion for that session, the writer saw it as an opportunity to allow the participants to understand the heart of a pastor.

During this session, the writer explained to the participants that everyone in the church had value and sacred worth. He reassured the participants that it was not his intention to remove active participants from serving or misuse anyone, but to love and work with everybody. This session lasted longer because the subject matter seemed to

stem from trauma reenactment experienced by senior members of the church based on the reappointment of pastors.

Fifth Session May 19th

The fifth session experienced a shape increase in attendance. Rather than the accustomed twelve participants, there were forty one people present. For the integrity of the project, the writer could not send them away to avoid persons feeling that they were not good enough to participate. The new comers were allowed to participate in the session causing a reconfiguration of group dynamics. Once the groups were assembled, they elected one person from each group to act as the scribe or reporter for that group. They assembled together and shared their understanding of what they thought itinerant ministry was and how it affects the whole church. The writer implied the wholeness of the general church's welfare and how the church must be patient and understanding of the concerns of its people in whom they trust. At moments during this session the writer was compelled to speak from personal experience about how pastoral transition both helped and hurt his family. He also explained that the church must take responsibility for its own course of action. The congregation should not allow external church leadership to stem the tide of growth and vitality at the local church level.

Sixth Session May 26th

During the final session, the program participants were given a post-test questionnaire and asked to complete it together as a group. While this process was going on, the writer and contextual associates began to hear positive comments about the writer's leadership. The participants felt satisfied they were allowed to come together to

express their concerns. They felt comfortable towards the end of the six weeks of being in intentional dialogue. Their attitude toward their pastor changed as they realized he was not the person they characterized him to be when he first arrived. They realized that together with their newly appointed pastor, they could embrace newness, change and the fresh wind of the Spirit moving among them.

The analysis of the pre and post-test data showed that pastoral succession or transition could be less threatening to the pastor and to the people. It was strongly suggested that the congregants be a part of the process in pastoral succession because they are the ones who must participate with the pastor for the ongoing success and viability of the church. The data collected suggested that denominational leaders are unaware of the concerns of the local church. If Episcopal leaders require that pastors respect and honor the congregations they are called to serve, the same level of sensitivity should be displayed by Episcopal leaders for the pastors they supervise.

Data Analysis

If the church is to continue to grow, it must reflect the local church's feelings. It must address the concerns of the local church and it must address the concerns of the pastor, especially during times of transition. The church must institute an ongoing learning process for members to stay abreast of the Book of Discipline of the A. M. E. Zion Church.

Do You Know What Itinerant Ministry Means?

Pre-Test Results	Post-Test Results
65 % No	100% Yes

The writer found this question to be critical to ongoing pastoral appointments. When congregants are unaware of the process of appointment making and how rarely pastors pick and choose which churches they pastor, it increases the level of unwanted pastoral changes. This question showed how uninformed members of the local church were about the role of itinerancy and how their lack of knowledge plays out in unnecessary negative actions to pastors who are appointed to serve them. Therefore, each pastor should teach their respective congregations the rules and policies of the denomination so that together, pastor and congregation can become a better church.

CHAPTER SIX

REFELECTION, SUMMERY AND CONCLUSION

This chapter consists of the writer's reflections, summations and concluding thought derived as a result of the field experience and project model. As the writer reflects on the life of the local church as part of the A. M. E. Zion denomination; and how pastors are shifted in and out, and based on the results of the research, the denomination should modify its appointment practices.

When the writer began this Doctor of Ministry program, he had no idea how much of an effect this project would have, not only in his ministry but in the lives of his family and the local church where he is pastor. The Doctor of Ministry program has allowed the writer to build quality relationships with peers, share his personal witness and experiences of ministry and feel confident that what was shared would be inviolate. The Doctor of Ministry program has fostered a broader, if not a new understanding of the ministry to which God has equipped him to perform.

The writer admits the execution of this ministry project has helped him cope with the pain of being reappointed to congregations that placed him in unwanted and unhealthy transitional situations. Understanding the shifts in ministry and understanding the call of ministry assisted the writer in comprehending itinerant ministry within the A. M. E. Zion Church. The writer was astonished at the power of the program model and how it affected others around him. Throughout the Doctor of Ministry program, the

writer realized that he was not suffering in silence. He realized that other pastors within the A. M. E. Zion Church had either experienced hurt or is currently experiencing hurt due to a lack of consultation and collaboration in the itinerant appointment process. On a broader scale, pastors, their families and the lives of people who had been under their ministry has been negatively affected as well.

When it came time to write the spiritual autobiography, the writer reached deep within himself to share experiences of how God's hand was leading and guiding him toward God's desired destiny; he realized that he was not alone. This is why it is important that consultation and collaboration be considered when the leadership of the A.M.E. Zion and other itinerate bodies, consider appointment changes. Judicatories must begin to understand the degree of hurt and pain that result from unwanted and unwelcomed pastoral changes.

During the testing and research phase of this ministry project, the writer found that many in the local church have no clue of what itinerant ministry is. They have only experienced praise, worship and ministry programs at the local church level. Several times during the workshops, participants expressed their frustration over the A. M. E. Zion Church's tradition of itinerant ministry. They felt they had *no say* in the process. They were helpless and could only do and accept what was deemed law according to their Book of Discipline. The writer agreed with the congregation, "The Book of Discipline is insensitive to the needs and demands of the local congregation, especially when the pastor has been at the church for a significant amount of time."

When pastors spend years nurturing, supporting and pastoring the people, congregational vitality and sustainability will be the result. Knowing the appropriate time

and how to prepare a congregation for a pastoral change is critical to the ongoing health of the local church. As stated in Chapter One, one does not become pastor over night. It is a process of getting to know the people and the people learning to trust the pastor. For every pastoral change, the process of finding common ground between pastor and people begins anew with no guarantees that the results will be favorable.

The field experience provided several opportunities for the writer as the newly appointed pastor to be transparent allowing the program participants to see his pastor's heart. The workshops allowed the writer to show his genuine positive regard for the congregation as a whole. When there is a realization that both pastor and people are negatively affected because of the appointment process, healing and restoration become easier to negotiate.

The writer benefited from the way the field experience was conducted. It allowed the congregation to share their concerns and matters of importance with him directly as a program participant. The field experience was conducted in such as way that it provided a safe sanctuary for both pastor and people to share their feelings; it was a humbling experience. From this experience, the writer was able to replicate this same process in the life of his family who also need healing and restoration as a result of the appointment process.

Throughout the process, apparent spiritual growth sprang forth and program participants became enlightened about areas of their denomination they had never considered. The growth and maturity that emerged from this ministry project allowed the pastor and congregation to coexist in harmony. The results of this process provide an overwhelming impetus for the modification of the appointment process within the

A. M. E. Zion Church's structure. Further findings that emerged from this ministry project identified a need for training for all pastors and congregants to help when an appointment change is necessary. There are too many cases of hurt as a result of the existing appointment process that some pastors have withdrawn their membership in the denomination and started their own churches taking members with them. This is not good because the A. M. E. Zion Church now looses members, and churches are vacant. When pastors are forced out, especially when they are pastor's beloved, members of the church follow them.

The writer suggests that the best solution for an effective pastoral appointment is to equip pastors and congregations on how to deal with leadership transition. The writer also suggests that if the A. M. E. Zion Church is to continue being the church of freedom, it must reevaluate the relevance of itinerant ministry. A critical sentiment that was voiced by the program participants was that, "The people are not angry with you (the newly appointed pastor), they just miss the one they loved (the outgoing pastor)."

Once the writer realized this revelation he felt compassion, showed compassion and thus received compassion. This was the antidote for the writer's future success; when a congregation is hurt, a newly appointed pastor has minimal opportunity to provide comfort and positive regard. However, when a newly appointed pastor understands and is trained in effective pastoral transition, the consequences of unwanted and unwelcomed appointments can be minimized. Being able to address the concerns of a hurting congregation and working to resolve those issues in a compassionate manner is vital for successful pastoral transitions.

As a result of this ministry project and entering the Doctor of Ministry program, the writer has made significance progress in the church in which he has been assigned. His family has adjusted well and the church has moved past its hurt and began to grow with love. They no longer doubt and distrust their pastor; rather, they embrace him and follow his leadership towards congregational restoration, vitality, and sustainability.

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